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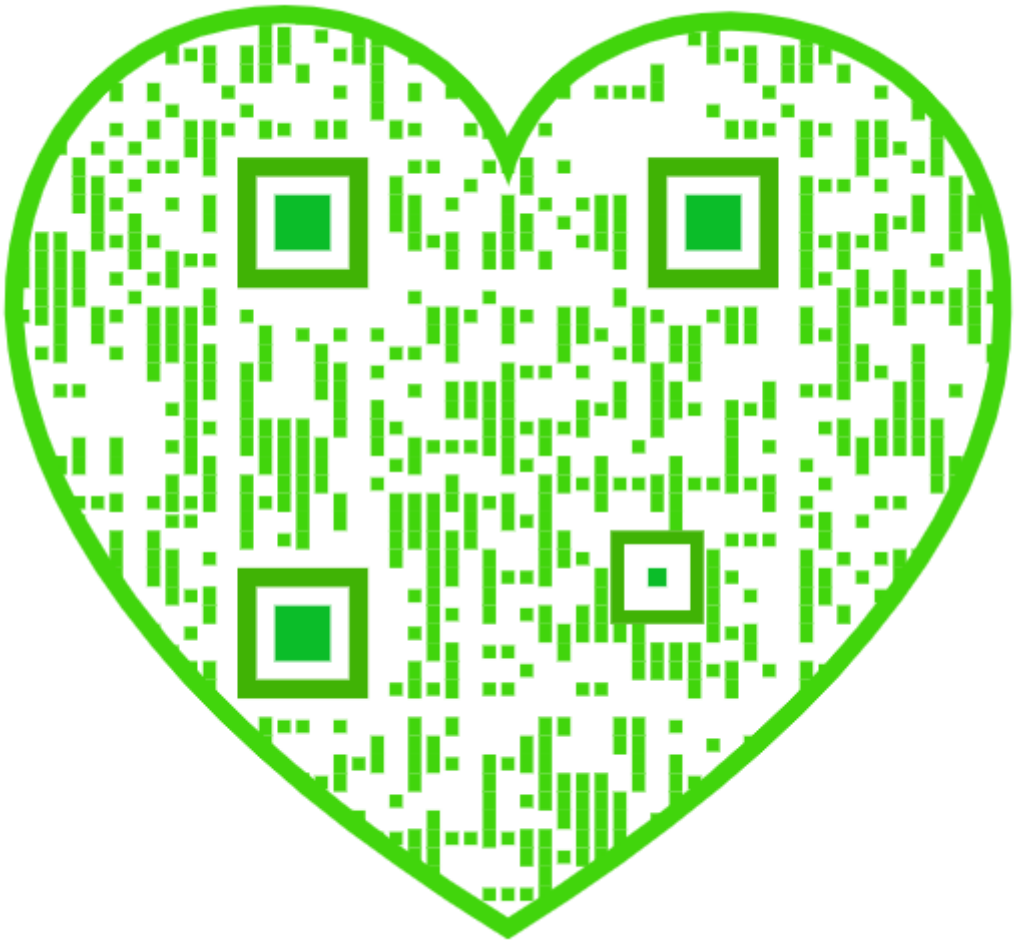

[2014/1]

De kunst van het liegen
Waarheid versus bedrog in de achttiende eeuw

Marleen de Vries

Toen Giacomo Casanova in 1797 besloot zijn memoires te publiceren, wist hij dat hij een dwaasheid beging door een aantal wilde avonturen ongecensureerd op papier te zetten. Hij was tweeënzeventig. Zijn vermaarde charmes waren misschien op, zijn geheugen werkte nog prima. In de jaren ervoor had hij 3700 pagina's weten te vullen over zichzelf en zijn tijdgenoten, gedeeltelijk als remedie tegen de verveling. Als laatste schreef hij een voorwoord. Daarin vertrouwde hij zijn lezers toe dat hij de waarheid altijd had liefgehad 'en wel zo hartstochtelijk dat ik soms mijn toevlucht tot liegen nam om haar tot hoofden te laten doordringen die er de bekoring niet van kenden. [...] Ik bedroog hen om hun ogen te openen; ik voelde mij ook niet schuldig, want mijn drijfveer was niet hebzucht'.[1]

Het is geen toeval dat een van de meest notoire bedriegers en charmeurs uit de achttiende eeuw in zijn voorwoord thema's als waarheid en leugen aansnijdt. Casanova was een kind van zijn tijd en wist dat de publieke druk om niet te liegen slechts groter was geworden in de eeuw waarin hij leefde. Waar de gemiddelde burger wellicht een (iets) betrouwbaarder en eerlijker mens was geworden in de loop der eeuwen, lijkt juist de professionele bedrieger, waartoe we Casanova kunnen rekenen, op te rukken in de achttiende eeuw. In het buitenland staat de eeuw daarom bekend als 'a defining period for modern concepts of fraud' en als 'an age of forgery'.[2] Oplichters maakten handig gebruik van het feit dat de wereld snel veranderde. Voor vervalsers vormden alle nieuwe financiële waardepapieren een regelrechte uitdaging. De herontdekking van de Middeleeuwen had pseudo-Middeleeuwse poëzie tot gevolg. En omdat de achttiende-eeuwer niet genoeg kon krijgen van reisverslagen over exotische oorden, zag de opportunist ook hier zijn kans schoon. 'It was an age of plagiarism, and travel liars appropriated material from other travelers and, ironically, from other travel liars'.[3] Hoewel er in het buitenland al langere tijd onderzoek wordt gedaan naar achttiende-eeuws bedrog is er in Nederland weinig aandacht besteed aan het onderwerp. Dat ligt zeker niet aan een gebrek aan oplichters, maar hangt samen met het gegeven dat

1 Casanova, *De school van het leven*, 17.
2 Baines, *The House of Forgery*, 2, 8.
3 Adams, *Travelers and Travel Liars*, 11-12.

bedrog over het algemeen moeilijk is te reconstrueren.[4] Genoeg reden voor de Werkgroep 18e Eeuw om een congres te wijden aan 'De kunst van het liegen', dat plaats vond op 17 en 18 januari 2014 in Amsterdam. Een korte inleiding.

Achterdocht en vertrouwen

Casanova zou het ongetwijfeld aan de stok hebben gekregen met leeftijdgenoot Immanuel Kant. Terwijl de katholieke, reislustige levensgenieter zijn bedrog in 1797 rechtvaardigde en legitimeerde met een beroep op de waarheid, voerde de protestantse filosoof die Pruisen zelden verliet, het debat over leugen en waarheid in datzelfde jaar tot een voorlopig hoogtepunt. Zelfs een leugentje om bestwil was zijns inziens verboden. In *Über ein vermeintes Recht aus Menschensliebe zu lügen* (1797) betoogde hij dat men onder alle omstandigheden de plicht had eerlijk te zijn. Zelfs al zou men daarmee een crimineel helpen.[5] Strenger dan Kant zou het niet worden, hoewel ook denkers als Montaigne en Bacon de leugenaar al als lafaard beschouwden.[6] En in het protestante Nederland was het heel normaal om de bevolking met een beroep op de bijbel op hun verantwoordelijkheid te wijzen. In 1735 wijdde een tijdschrift als *Het weekelyks Orakel*, waarachter de doopsgezinde Amsterdamse boekhandelaar Marten Schagen schuil ging, een geheel nummer aan de vraag of een 'Leugentje, om profyts wille' was toegestaan.[7] Nee, aldus het orakel. 'De hatelyke natuur des LEUGENS, de gezonde Reden, en Gods uitdrukkelyke Wet, verbied het [...] volslagen'. Vooral vreesde het orakel de maatschappelijke onrust die het gevolg zou zijn van list en bedrog.

> Laat hem daarenboven denken, dat hy een Lid der Menschelyke Maatschappye is; dat hy verpligt is, zoo veel in hem zy haar heil te bevorderen; dat hy met te Liegen het onderling vertrouwen breeken, agterdogt, schade, met andere onheilen en quade gesteltenissen verwekken, gelyk door altoos waar te spreeken de ongekreukte Eerlyheit van mond en hart handhaven zal.[8]

Die angst voor verstoring van de maatschappelijke orde lijkt kenmerkend voor

4 Een goede inleiding op het onderwerp is Baines, *The House of Forgery*. Zie verder: Bok, *Lying*; Derrida, *Histoire du mensonge*; Groom, *The Forger's Shadow*; Haywood, *Faking it*; Keevak, *The Pretended Asian*; Lynch, *Deception and Detection*; Moore, *The Appearance of Truth*; Shapin, *A Social History of Truth*; Smyth, *The Habit of Lying*. In Nederland: Altena, Diederiks en Faber (red.), *Feit en fictie in misdaadliteratuur*; De Haas (red.), *Achter slot en grendel*.

5 Bok, *Lying*, 37-46.

6 Shapin, *A Social History of Truth*, 81-82.

7 Over dit tijdschrift en zijn auteur: Hanou, 'De geleerdentijdschriften van Marten Schagen', I.

8 *Het weekelyks orakel* (28 September 1735) citaten op 41, 42 en 45.

de achttiende eeuw. In de eeuwen ervoor kwam het onderlinge vertrouwen op basis van ongeschreven wetten 'face-to-face' tot stand. De wereld was relatief klein en overzichtelijk. 'Premodern society looked truth in the face'.[9] Bijna vanzelfsprekend kon men er op rekenen dat een 'gentleman' zich beschaafd en eerlijk gedroeg, zoals Locke beschrijft in zijn *Some thougths concerning education* (1693). Diens eer, stand en waardigheid verboden hem te liegen. Vertrouwen was een zaak tussen heren.[10] Anders lag dat voor iemand als Antoni van Leeuwenhoek, die noch gentleman noch wetenschapper was, maar wel briljant. Hij moest vertrouwen zien af te dwingen bij de Royal Society in Londen. Zijn brieven aan het genootschap over zijn opzienbarende en voor niet-specialisten nogal ongeloofwaardige ontdekkingen, liet hij vergezeld gaan van acht getuigenverklaringen.[11] Zonder dergelijke getuigschriften kwam men niet ver in de achttiende eeuw. De complexiteit van de samenleving zorgde er voor dat het ooit zo heilige geloof in de mensheid begon af te brokkelen. Voortaan moest men op abstracter niveau zien te vertrouwen.[12]

Een complexe wereld

In de eerste decennia van de achttiende eeuw moet de maatschappij behoorlijk complex zijn geworden en daardoor moeilijker te overzien. Dankzij nieuwe wetenschappelijke inzichten en communicatiemiddelen werd de wereld groter; socialer ook door fenomenen als trekschuiten en genootschappen. Dat was aantrekkelijk, maar ook gevaarlijk: bij elke nieuwe ontdekking of inzicht, bij elk krantenartikel of verrassende ontmoeting moest men het risico incalculeren bedrogen te worden. Wie de kleinschaligheid van een dorp inruilde voor de anonimiteit van de stad moest helemaal oppassen. En degene die het zich kon permitteren om een geleerdentijdschrift als de *Boekzaal van Europe* bij te houden, ontdekte daarin allerlei nieuwe wetenschappelijke 'waarheden' en moest gaan geloven in zaken die voorheen voor onmogelijk werden gehouden.[13]

Ook het kwaad leek in Nederland in de eerste decennia van de eeuw steeds complexer te worden en niet alleen grotere, maar ook onzichtbaarder vormen aan te nemen. Zo vormde de paalworm in 1730 een enorme bedreiging voor de fundamenten van de Nederlandse dijken en daarmee voor het land. En dan was er het kwaad dat 'sodomie' heette, een kwaal die al net zo moeilijk te detecteren en even ondermijnend voor de Republiek was als de paalworm.

9 Shapin, *A Social History of Truth*, 410.
10 Ibidem, 73-74.
11 Ibidem, 306.
12 Ibidem, 410-412.
13 Ibidem, 198-199.

De meeste opwinding en woede veroorzaakte echter de windhandel in 1720. Deze nationale zwendel in aandelen vormde het ultieme bewijs dat het realiteitsbesef van de Nederlander aan het afbrokkelen was. Waarheid en bedrog stonden opeens in het middelpunt van de belangstelling en begrippen als 'waar' en 'vals' domineerden het maatschappelijk debat. Want, hoe gek moest men zijn om 'echt' geld, in munten, om te ruilen voor onzichtbaar geld in de vorm van waardepapieren? En waar moest het heen met het land als de ware koophandel in tastbare producten werd vervangen door nephandel in speculatieve aandelen?[14]

Over dergelijke maatschappelijke vraagstukken en bijbehorende emoties kon men in deze periode vooral lezen in de commerciële tijdschriften en toneelstukken van een groep schrijvende pioniers: journalisten, toneel- en romanschrijvers.[15] Zij experimenteerden met literaire vorm en inhoud, in de hoop op publiek en inkomsten, en creëerden daarmee, achteraf bekeken, de moderne roman en de moderne journalistiek.[16] Met veel leedvermaak wezen deze opportunistische schrijvers hun lezers op de onvolkomenheden van de mens en zijn neiging tot hypocrisie en leugenachtigheid; thema's die naderhand tot het vaste repertoire van de Nederlandse literatuur en journalistiek behoorden. Jacob Campo Weyerman zag de windhandel vooral als een kans om zichzelf als journalist te profileren. Op vrijdag 13 September 1720 lanceerde hij vanuit Rotterdam zijn eerste satirische weekblad onder de naam *Rotterdamsche Hermes*. Daarin beschreef hij de 'Aktionisten' als 'Lantpalingen, *Vipers* genoemt, dewelke den buik en het ingewant van hare vruchtbare Moeder doorknagen'.[17]

In tijdschriften als die van Weyerman en consorten vormde de waarheid een terugkerend thema. Altijd als tegengif tegen de leugen. Geen auteur twijfelde er aan of die waarheid bestond. Nergens werd het begrip geproblematiseerd. Nihilisme en de latere negentiende-eeuwse en postmoderne scepsis ten opzichte van de waarheid ontbraken geheel en al. Zij was uniform en consistent.[18] Wel vroeg menig satiricus zich af of zijn lezers wel rijp waren voor de waarheid. De *Examinator* uit 1718 was ronduit cynisch: 'Wie zou dan van u alle so dwaas en onvoorzigtig zyn, dat hy de naakte waarheid omhelsde en begeerde. O neen!'[19] Weyerman concludeerde in 1737: 'Het gros der menschen getuygt

14 Leemans, 'Verse weavers', 179-180.
15 Over de vele toneelstukken naar aanleiding van de windhandel in deze periode, ibidem, 177.
16 Underwood, *Journalism and the Novel*, 34.
17 Weyerman, *Rotterdamsche Hermes*, 38.
18 Lynch, *Deception and Detection*, 71.
19 *Examinator*, 14.

eenpaariglyk, van de waarheyt te beminnen in het algemeen, maar niemant wil met de waarheyt heulen in het partikulier, vooral als de waarheyt hunne feylen al te na komt'.[20]

De ironie wil dat schrijvers als Weyerman, Jan van Gyzen, Willem van Swaanenburg en Willem van Ranouw zelf ook niet vies waren van plagiaat en de grenzen tussen feit en fictie niet al te strikt trokken. Daarbij moet worden opgemerkt dat het hedendaagse onderscheid tussen journalistiek als medium voor waarheid en romans als medium voor fictie in de vroege achttiende eeuw nog niet bestond.[21] Journalistiek leek daarom vaak op fictie en fictie kon er uitzien als journalisitiek: 'literary creativity [...] sold the newspaper, not the day's breaking news'.[22]

Het brein van de leugenaar

Dat het niet meeviel om in de achttiende eeuw te leven als het aankwam op vertrouwen en bedrog, liet Voltaire zien aan de hand van zijn personage *Candide* (1759). Zelfs als je eigen intenties goed waren, waren er altijd anderen die je niet kon vertrouwen. Voltaire was zeker niet de enige verlichte geest die cynisch oordeelde over de achttiende eeuw. *Philosophe* Diderot vatte in 1762 een mensenleven als volgt samen in een brief aan zijn geliefde Sophie Volland: 'zijn hele leven, van het brabbelende begin tot de seniele ouderdom, brengt hij door tussen alle mogelijke schurken en bedriegers'.[23] Arts-anatoom Petrus Camper schreef in 1780: 'Waarheid is altoos mijn doel geweest, echter heb ik ondervonden dikwijls met het beste oogmerk van de wereld gedwaald te hebben. Waarheid ligt dikwerf zóó diep in de put, dat zij haast niet te ontdekken is'.[24] Predikant Willem Anthony Ockerse signaleerde in 1788 dat wantrouwen tot zijn grote spijt een noodzakelijk kwaad was geworden:

> De eerlijkheid en het onderling vertrouwen in de t'zamenleving der menschen is merklijk minder dan voorheen. Eertijds was het genoeg iemands woord te hebben; men noemde 'een woord een woord, een man een man;' thands zijn handschriften, getuigen en eeden geene voldoende waerborgen meer tegen het bedrog. [...] Het is bijkans eene noodzaaklijkheid geworden, schoon de menschlijke natuur daarvan gruwe, niemand te vertrouwen.[25]

20 *De naakte waerheyt*, 3.
21 Underwood, *Journalism and the Novel*, 53.
22 Ibidem, 35.
23 Diderot, *Brieven aan Sophie*, 378.
24 Geciteerd bij Otterspeer, 'De aangenaamheden der natuurlijke historie', 10.
25 Ockerse, *Ontwerp tot eene algemeene characterkunde* 1, 158.

Voor de ontwikkeling van het menselijk brein schijnen bedrog en wantrouwen overigens onontbeerlijk te zijn geweest. Volgens psycholoog Nicholas Humphrey is onze intelligentie vooral geëvolueerd dankzij de tact en de creativiteit die nodig zijn om te overleven in een groep. Primatologen Richard Byrne en Andrew Whiten gingen een stapje verder door te stellen dat degene die het beste kon bedriegen de grootste overlevingskansen had. Antropoloog Robin Dunbar, ten slotte, wist inderdaad aan te tonen dat hoe beter de leugenaar was, hoe groter zijn brein.[26] Dit impliceert dat ook het bedriegen zelf in de loop der eeuwen moet zijn geëvolueerd en langzaam maar zeker tot kunst moet zijn verheven. Terecht vroeg Jacques Derrida zich in 2005 af: is het mogelijk om een geschiedenis van de leugen te schrijven?[27]

Als men in de achttiende eeuw al iets bevroedde van het causale verband tussen bedrog en de ontwikkeling van het brein, dan schoot men daar evengoed bar weinig mee op. Slachtoffers van moordenaars, dieven, kwakzalvers en leugenaars wilden maar één ding: dat het moorden, stelen, valse hoop geven en liegen zouden stoppen. Soms lukte dat. Voltaires gevecht om de ten onrechte geëxecuteerde Jean Calas te rehabiliteren liet zien dat er hoop was! De *philosophe* kreeg uiteindelijk de waarheid boven tafel en het recht zegevierde alsnog, zonder dat de arme Calas weer tot leven kon worden gewekt.

Hoewel Voltaire een bekende Fransman was met invloed, lukte het gewone stervelingen soms ook om hun recht te halen. Marie Blomme bijvoorbeeld, een gouvernante uit Kortrijk, vocht met succes haar baas aan die haar had bezwangerd, maar haar in eerste instantie geen alimentatie wilde geven en haar daarom beschuldigde van leugens. Haar proces is uniek, omdat er geen sprake was van een misdrijf, geweld of diefstal, maar van poging tot bedrog. Elwin Hofman laat in dit nummer zien langs welke wegen Marie Blomme en haar omgeving feiten verzamelden om de waarheid te reconstrueren. Het ging daarbij om juridische feiten, maar ook om informatie die via de biecht, reputatiemanagement en zelfreflectie werden verkregen.

Fact checking

Fact checking was hoogst noodzakelijk in een wereld zonder bestaanszekerheid, maar bleef, bij gebrek aan de huidige informatietechnologie, een heikele aangelegenheid. Waar de hedendaagse mens in West-Europa gebukt gaat onder een te veel aan informatie, kon de achttiende-eeuwer soms gek worden van

26 Leslie, *De psychologie van de leugen*, 12-19.
27 Derrida, *Histoire du mensonge*.

een gebrek aan feiten en dus aan waarheid. Wie wilde weten wat er twintig kilometer verderop gaande was, zag zich al voor een raadsel geplaatst. Neem die kleine aardbeving die men op 14 augustus 1758 's ochtends vroeg in Leiden, Gouda en Rotterdam meende waar te nemen. In werkelijkheid vlogen er die zomerochtend twee pakhuizen met kruid op de Amsterdamse Overtoom de lucht in. Daarbij kwamen ten minste drie arbeiders om:

> een half lichaam vondt men geslaagen tegen de Kolfbaan van het Wynhuis Bloemendaal, dat het tweede huis is, van de Kruidmaakerye naar de Stad gerekend. Een Hand vondt men in de Laan van het Pesthuis; ééne andere op het Dak van zeker daar naby staande Huis, door een Kuiper bewoond; wel dertien Huizen voorby de Kruidmaakerye een ander lichaam zonder hoofd, dat deerlyk gekwetst en aan stukken geslagen was; elders vondt men meer stukken en brokken van de ongelukkig omgekoomene Arbeidslieden.[28]

Internationaal nieuws reisde nog langzamer. Dat Lissabon op 1 november 1755 geheel plat was gelegd door een aardbeving, hoorde men in Amsterdam pas eind november. Legendarisch is de anekdote waarin de koning van Siam weigert te geloven dat in Nederland rivieren konden bevriezen, zodanig dat een olifant er op zou kunnen lopen.[29]

Schrijvers van reisverhalen, een van de populairste genres in de achttiende eeuw, waren zich pijnlijk bewust van het feit dat *fact checking* voor de thuisblijvers onmogelijk was. Juist om die reden, betoogt Anne Thell in haar bijdrage, voelden reisauteurs zich geroepen om verantwoording af te leggen over wat ze schreven. Hierdoor ontwikkelden voorwoorden en inleidingen bij reisverslagen zich in de eerste helft van de achttiende eeuw tot een soort microgenre waarin werd getheoretiseerd over hoe men de werkelijkheid zo waarheidsgetrouw mogelijk weer kon geven. Een van de aanbevelingen was een eenvoudige schrijfstijl, zonder al te veel literaire fratsen.

Toch konden de vele voorwoorden en inleidingen van ongetwijfeld oprechte reisverhalenauteurs niet verhinderen dat collega-schrijvers er soms een iets minder strikte moraal op nahielden. IJdelheid, hebzucht en het laten prevaleren van eigen (voor)oordelen zorgden er voor dat lang niet elke reiziger zijn observaties naar waarheid neerpende, aldus Percy Adams in *Travelers and Travel Liars*.[30] George Psalmanazar hield een bestseller over aan zijn *Description of Formosa* (1704). Een leven lang claimde hij dat hij op Formosa,

28 *Amsterdam, in zyne geschiedenissen*, 268-269.
29 Shapin, A *Social History of Truth*, 229.
30 Adams, *Travelers and Travel Liars*, 10.

het huidige Taiwan, was geboren en dat zijn beschrijving van dat land geheel en al op waarheid beruste. Pas in zijn postuum verschenen *Memoirs* (1764) gaf de in Frankrijk geboren auteur toe dat hij alles uit zijn duim had gezogen.

Ook de toenemende aandacht voor het eigen verleden en voor authentieke historische bronnen bracht personen met een rijke verbeeldingskracht op ideeën. Literaire hypes als de middeleeuwse poëzie van Thomas Rowley of de gedichten van Ossian bleken naderhand gebaseerd op lucht. De gedichten waren helemaal niet middeleeuws maar eigentijdse producten, afkomstig van Thomas Chatterton, zoon van een koster, en James Mcpherson, een boerenzoon. Maar hoe kon de achttiende-eeuwer dat weten? Hij of zij beschikte immers niet over de kennis die wij inmiddels hebben?

Jack Lynch, auteur van *Deception and Detection in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, verplaatst zichzelf in het openingsartikel van dit themanummer in de contemporaine lezer. Vanuit diens perspectief werden kunst en literatuur immers sowieso omschreven als 'splendide mendax' oftewel 'edel logenachtig'.[31] Hoe hadden achttiende-eeuwers binnen een fictief kader echt van nep kunnen onderscheiden? En moeten wetenschappers zich vandaag de dag geen rekenschap geven van dat epistemologische proces van kennis vergaren van de personen die zich op dat moment gesteld zagen voor raadsels als semi-middeleeuwse poëzie? Lynch neemt het in zijn stuk op voor de gedupeerden en waarschuwt voor al te snelle, a-historische conclusies.

Kan men ontsnappen aan bedrog?

Misschien was de achttiende eeuw vooral de eeuw die probeerde te ontsnappen aan de verleiding om zichzelf te bedriegen. Jacqueline Hylkema laat zien dat er een opvallend verschil bestaat tussen zeventiende- en achttiende-eeuwse schilderijen met afbeeldingen van bedriegers. Diende het bedrog in de zeventiende eeuw vooral het plezier van de kijker, in de achttiende eeuw krijgt de laatste ook een les mee, te weten dat hij of zij zich kon wapenen tegen bedriegers. In de werken van Hogarth wordt daarom niet alleen de bedrieger te kijk gezet, maar ook de bedrogene(n). Met onmiskenbare spot dwong de kunstenaar het publiek aldus om na te denken over zijn eigen aandeel in dit soort zaken. Wat de auteurs van satirische tijdschriften met woorden vermochten te doen - het ontleden van een dubieuze moraal - probeerde Hogarth met beelden te bereiken.

Dit proces van demonstreren, entertainen en verlichten zien we ook in de

31 *Algemeene Vaderlandsche Letter-oefeningen* (1805) 350.

romans uit die periode. Die neigden meer en meer naar wat we tegenwoordig ‘realisme’ zouden noemen, ook romans die overduidelijk fictie waren. ‘It is fascinating to realize how in the eighteenth century, many people wanted more “truth” in the novel, and that Defoe and his fellow “novelists” felt bound to defend their imaginative writing as something more than mere fiction’, schrijft Underwood.[32] Steeds vaker verdrong de rauwe werkelijkheid koninklijke drama's en pastorale romances. Libertijnen, schuinsmarcheerders, hoeren en ander gespuis bevolkten de vele avonturenromans die nog het best te omschrijven zijn als een mengeling van soap, klucht en drama. Ze waren mateloos populair. In sneltreinvaart en met een onvermijdelijk hoog roddelgehalte werden de levens en avonturen van criminelen, bohémiens en marginalen aan de man gebracht. Niets fijner, kennelijk, dan te lezen hoe bedriegers uiteindelijk ten val kwamen.[33]

Johannes Verhey had zo'n romanpersonage kunnen zijn. Ton Jongenelen wekt deze vergeten ondernemer tot leven aan de hand van het notarieel archief in Amsterdam en het archief van het Hof van Holland. Verhey was iemand die groot dacht. Met een nietsontziend narcisme startte hij verzekeringsondernemingen als de Generale Nederlandsche Praebenden Compagnie die in levensverzekeringen deed. Verhey werd er vooral zelf rijk van. De reconstructie van zijn (wan)daden bevestigt de hypothese van Baines dat de opkomst van een typisch achttiende-eeuws verschijnsel als de vervalsing direct samenhangt met de vele financeële innovaties in die eeuw. Waardepapieren werden in deze nieuwe kredieteconomie steeds belangrijker, maar daarmee nam ook het risico op bedrog toe.[34]

Van der Hey leek vooral te lijden aan het ons welbekende graaisyndroom, maar vele andere achttiende-eeuwers bedrogen uit pure noodzaak. Wat bijvoorbeeld te denken van al die vrouwen die als man door het leven gingen? Zoals die stalknecht die bij overlijden een ‘vrouwspersoon’ bleek te zijn? Zij had vijftien jaar lang haar naaste omgeving moeten bedriegen om te kunnen overleven. Niemand had het flauwste vermoeden gehad, want ‘Dieren, die niemand anders kon regeeren, wist zij in de manege zoo te dwingen en te temmen, dat haars gelijke zelfs onder de mannelijke ‘cecte’ niet te vinden

32 Underwood, *Journalism and the Novel*, 46. Zie ook: Rustin, *Mensonge et vérité dans le roman français*, 18.

33 Zie Thuijs, ‘Misdaadverslaggeving’. Het gaat om romans als: C. Lonius A.F. [= J.W. Claus van Laar], *Den Bedrieger Bedroogen* (Amsterdam 1737), idem, *Den Gestraften Bedrieger* (Amsterdam 1737) en [P. Bakker], *Den bedrieger zels bedrogen* (Harderwijk 1746).

34 Baines, *House of Forgery*, 11, 13-14.

was'.[35] Ongetwijfeld heeft de vrouw gedroomd over een leven zonder leugens, maar hoe had ze dat kunnen realiseren en wie kon zich zoiets in de praktijk veroorloven? De anti-moraal die *enfant terrible* Markies De Sade zijn vrouwelijke lezers voorschotelde - om liegend door het leven te gaan - was daarom niet eens zo onrealistisch.

> Laten we dus altijd gerust zo onbetrouwbaar zijn als maar mogelijk is: laten we het beschouwen als de weg naar gunst, aanzien, goede naam, rijkdom en vrijelijk het kleine gevoel van wrevel, dat bij ons opkomt doordat we de mensen bedrogen hebben, doen vervagen in het opwindend besef een schurk te zijn.[36]

Tot slot

Alleen Jean-Jacques Rousseau bleek dapper of gek genoeg om de naakte waarheid recht in de ogen te kijken. Als een van de eerste intellectuelen in de achttiende eeuw paste hij de nieuwe Verlichtingsidealen toe op zijn eigen leven. Door een ongecensureerde autobiografie te publiceren en zichzelf publiekelijk aan de schandpaal te nagelen, hoopte hij het bewijs te leveren van zijn eerlijkheid. Wat gebruikelijk was in criminele biografieën, namelijk dat alle strafbare feiten en leugens van de hoofdpersoon haarfijn uit de doeken werden gedaan,[37] paste Rousseau op zichzelf toe. Genadeloos legde hij zichzelf op de snijtafel in zijn *Confessions* (1762). Zijn diepste geheimen, zijn leugens, zijn diefstallen; alles deelde hij met zijn lezers. Ziehier de mens:

> Ik heb de waarheid gezegd. Als iemand dingen weet die in strijd zijn met wat ik hier heb verteld, ook al zou het honderdmaal bewezen zijn, is zijn kennis louter leugen en bedrog en als hij, zolang ik nog in leven ben, weigert dit grondig met mij te onderzoeken en tot klaarheid te brengen, bemint hij rechtvaardigheid noch waarheid.[38]

Ongekend nieuw en modern was dit project waarmee Rousseau zichzelf niet alleen status en autonomie verleende, maar waarmee hij zich ook bewust als outsider portretteerde. Verguld noteerde hij: 'Laat de bazuin van het laatste Oordeel maar schallen, het geeft niet wanneer. Ik zal met dit boek in de hand voor de opperste rechter verschijnen. Ik zal dan luid en duidelijk zeggen: 'Zie, dit heb ik gedaan, dit heb ik gedacht, dit ben ik geweest'.[39] Ondertussen

35 Bicker Raye, *Het dagboek van Jacob Bicker Raye*, 104.
36 De Sade, *De slaapkamerfilosofen*, 104.
37 Zie Thuijs, 'Misdaadverslaggeving'.
38 Rousseau, *Bekentenissen*, 717.
39 Ibidem, 13.

bond Rousseau in zijn *Confessions* ook de strijd aan met het systeem en met zijn vijanden. Hij kon het moeilijk verkroppen dat de waarheid niet altijd tot rechtvaardigheid leidde. Casanova was wat dat betreft een stuk laconieker. Zijn memoires, vijfendertig jaar later, waren meer 'een algemene biecht' dan 'onbeschaamde zelfverheerlijking' en meer bedoeld om te plezieren dan om met terugwerkende kracht zijn gelijk te halen.[40]

Beide mannen waren zo gevormd door verlicht gedachtengoed dat ze in staat waren om afstand te nemen en zichzelf te schetsen met gebreken en al. Misschien liepen ze een stapje voor op de samenleving als geheel. Want waar de Schotse Common Sense-filosofen en een persoon als Immanuel Kant bleven benadrukken dat de leugen moest worden uitgebannen in het belang van een betrouwbare samenleving,[41] wisten Rousseau en Casanova al dat dit ideaal, menselijk gesproken, een illusie was. Iets dergelijks lezen we ook in 1799 in het *Magazyn voor de critische wijsgeerte*. Paulus van Hemert besefte zich terdege dat het Kantiaanse *gij zult niet liegen* te hoog was gegrepen:

> Maar helaas! hoe zwak is de mensch, in dit opzigt [...] inzonderheid de Geletterde, de man van eenige vermaardheid! Al zet hij, gelijk de *chineesche* Kraamer, voor de kraam zijner bovenzinlijke waaren, met gouden letteren: hier bedriegt men niet: nogtans moet de Menschkenner, zoo dikwijls hij voorbij gaat, en dat opschrift leest, het hoofd schudden.[42]

Het lijkt de grootste paradox van de Verlichting te zijn en het zal ook blijken uit de artikelen in dit nummer: hoe meer (zelf)kennis men kreeg en hoe beter de werkelijkheid werd doorgrond, hoe groter de confrontatie met datgene wat men wilde uitroeien: bedrog, ongelijkheid en onrechtvaardigheid.

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40 Casanova, *De school van het leven*, 9.
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Not-so-splendide mendax: standing up for dupes

Jack Lynch

In examining fakes and forgeries, we moderns often forget that we occupy a position unavailable to the original disputants. The very framing of our subject of inquiry, fakes, takes for granted that the items we study are inauthentic, which allows us to pass judgment on those who were duped. At the time, though, there was very little clarity, and those who argued over authenticity had the difficult task of sorting the true from the false. This article encourages us to try on occasion to see fakery from the point of view of those who did not know the outcome of the disputes.

The phrase *splendide mendax* comes from Horace's *Odes*, book 3, ode 11, though it gets its most famous eighteenth-century outing in the frontispiece to the 1735 Faulkner edition of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. Swift is toying with the degree of authority he warrants, signaling to classically educated readers that the narrator may not be as trustworthy as his text insists. The Horatian tag, a famous oxymoron, is not easy to translate - not because the words are difficult, but because they contain a lot of compressed paradoxical sense. Classicist James Gow uses the phrase as an example of 'Horace's untranslatable brevity'.[1] *Mendax* is easy; it means 'false', usually in the sense of 'prone to tell falsehoods', though it can refer either to the teller of an untruth or to the untruth itself. *Splendide* is less obvious. It is the adverbial form of the adjective *splendidus*, which in turn derives from *splendeo* 'to shine, to be bright or radiant'. It is significant that the English words used to render the noun *splendidus* capture both the literal and metaphorical implications of the original: to call someone or something 'bright', 'brilliant', or 'illustrious' is to express abstract or moral qualities with a metaphor related to light.

How, then, to reconcile the *splendide* and the *mendax*? Most translators have dwelt on the idea of a virtuous lie, a falsehood told for the sake of a higher good - the context of the original Horatian ode. Merriam-Webster opts for 'nobly untruthful'. Others have seen the lie as wonderful in its own right: one translator renders it 'splendidly deceiving'. David Womersley's edition of *Gulliver* recycles an eighteenth-century translation, 'gloriously false'.[2] A few translators, though, treat *splendide* not as a compliment, but as a more literal kind of glowing. *Shining*, after all, the etymon of *splendide*, can mean

1 Horace, *Q. Horati Flacci Carminum Liber IV*, xxi n.
2 Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, note to frontispiece.

both ‘wonderful’ and ‘difficult to miss’. So *splendide mendax* can also mean something like ‘glaringly false’.

My interest is in the falsehoods that are less noble, less glorious - or, what may be a better way to put it, the less noble and glorious aspects of the familiar falsehoods. And I am especially interested in the falsehoods that are, or at least were, less glaring - the ones that *are* easily missed. A fundamental bias all too often threatens to distort the modern study of deception. An inclination, a habit of mind, that guides most investigation of literary lies calls for some caution.

Those who study fraud and deception generally proceed by assembling a canon - perhaps more accurately an anti-canon, perhaps a shadow-canon - of lies of many varieties: plagiarisms, forgeries like the poems of Ossian and Rowley, pseudepigrapha like the *Epistles* of Phalaris, hoaxes like Psalmanazar's Formosan imposture, and so on. Then they sit in judgment over the seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century participants in the story - but they do it from a twenty-first-century bench.

We moderns like to introduce complexity where we imagine earlier commentators saw only black-and-white answers. We pride ourselves on this, and figure our complexity to ourselves as sophistication. Where Thomas Warton and Edmond Malone could look at the poems of Rowley and ask only ‘Were they really written in the fifteenth century?’, we enlightened moderns can meditate on the role played by an imagined late-medieval Bristol as a font of poetic genius among the early Romantics. Where Samuel Johnson and William Shaw could look at the Ossianic poems and ask only ‘Were they real or not?’, we can bring in modern conceptions of oral transmission and improvisatory composition. Howard Gaskill, for instance, argues that ‘Johnson got it wrong’ with his restrictive literalist approach to truth in the Ossianic poems arguing that *Fingal* is ‘a synthetic epic whole which is in part a collage of genuine elements, and in part free invention’.[3] As another critic, Donald Rayfield, writes:

> Macpherson has been partly rehabilitated: partly because the boundary between recording and inventing folk poetry has been recognized as fuzzy, and because translation theory now accommodates exercises in re-creation where, in Borges's words, the original can instead be accused of being unfaithful to the translation.[4]

3 Gaskill, ‘The Manuscript Myth’, 6.
4 Rayfield, ‘Forgiving Forgery’, xxix.

I admire Borges, and I love ideas about folk poetry and fuzzy boundaries and all the rest. I am, after all, a product of my own age. At the same time, I am convinced we should feel at least a momentary hesitation before we start talking about Borgesian notions of reality, parasitic conceptions of literary authenticity, and 'synthetic epics' in the eighteenth century. It becomes easy to fall into the enthusiastic postmodern rapture that possesses Margaret Russett in her book *Fictions and Fakes*: 'The ancient is actually modern; the youth is ancient; the copy is the original; the original is the copy; the author is a fictional character; the editor is the author'.[5] Paradoxical formulations like these are undeniably appealing ideas for moderns, and they keep us interested when our source material starts to get dull. But I worry that imposing twentieth- and twenty-first-century ideas about authenticity on eighteenth-century disputes over authenticity can distort the material we have an obligation to see clearly.

What we too often forget is that, in making these judgments from a position of knowledge, we risk misrepresenting the process of discovery that the original participants were engaged in. We, after all, know how the story ends - that is to say, we already know which lies are lies. It is built into the very fact of our assembling a canon: when we talk about what Nick Groom calls 'fakelit', we are taking a lot of complicated answers about authenticity for granted in a way the original participants could never have done. At least in the major fakes, we now have a pretty good idea of the facts of the matter - even if we are at times prone to forget them when they interfere with the narratives we want to tell. When we talk about Ossian, for instance, we do so with the benefit of the report of the Highland Committee of 1805 and the mid-twentieth-century work of Derick Thomson, which between them established as authoritatively as we're likely to see the ratio of authentic traditional material to James Macpherson's confection.[6] Macpherson's contemporaries, though - and, for that matter, the people who lived in the decades after the publication of the Ossianic poems - had to get by without the benefit of that work.

Why is this a problem? Isn't it always better to know more than less? Of course it is good to have the knowledge. The danger, though, is that we may lose the ability to place ourselves in the position of the original disputants who were charged with separating the authentic from the bogus. It is easy to look down on our predecessors for lacking our own sophistication in understanding

5 Russett, *Fictions and Fakes*, 64-65.

6 See Thomson, '"Ossian" Macpherson and the Gaelic World of the Eighteenth Century', 14; Thomson, *The Gaelic Sources of Macpherson's 'Ossian'*, passim; and Curley, *Samuel Johnson, the Ossian Fraud, and the Celtic Revival in Great Britain and Ireland*, passim.

deception, but this may be unfair to those predecessors. Where we see clarity - often clarity that needs to be rendered more complex to sustain our critical interest - the original disputants saw murkiness. My hope is to recover the mentality of those who were originally charged with arguing over the authenticity of the deceptions that we now study - an on-the-ground view that does not take the outcome of the investigations for granted. This unfamiliar epistemological position makes us sensitive to elements of the debates that we are too quick to neglect.

Consider how many of the techniques we moderns use to distinguish fakes were simply unavailable to eighteenth-century readers. Take, for instance, one of the most outrageous hoaxes of the eighteenth century, George Psalmanazar's Formosan imposture. Somehow a European teenager - probably from the south of France - managed to convince the world that he was a native of Formosa, modern Taiwan.[7] This strikes us as so outrageous that we have trouble imagining anyone was ever taken in, especially when we consider the evidence that he may have been blond-haired and blue-eyed. And that judgment comes with an implied sneer: 'If *I* had been there, *I* certainly would not have fallen for that crude hoax'.

But would I? - would any of us? Had we met Psalmanazar in London in 1704, we would not be able to compare him to the East Asians we have met over our lifetimes, or to the photographs, films, and television programs that show us Taiwan and the Taiwanese. Actual Formosans were exceptionally rare in Europe at the turn of the century, and most people would never have met one. Examining the far side of the world was out of the question. Textual evidence about Formosa was of course available, but the exotic tales from abroad circulating in the early eighteenth century were far from reliable. In 1703, the very year of Psalmanazar's arrival in London, William Dampier advised his readers to be prepared for many oddities:

> Considering that the main of this Voyage hath its Source laid in long Tracts of the Remoter parts both of the *East* and *West Indies*, some of which very seldom visited by *English* men, and others as rarely by any *Europeans*, I may without vanity encourage the Reader to expect many things wholly new to him.[8]

7 The best overview is Keevak, *The Pretended Asian*; the best factual account of his life is DeMaria's entry in the *ODNB*.

8 Dampier, *A New Voyage*, sig. A3r-v.

A struggle to find the proper balance between foolish credulity and corrosive skepticism was the default mode of anyone reading travel narratives in the early eighteenth century. And so most contemporary inquirers into Psalmanazar's story, unable to draw on indisputably true accounts of Formosa, had to content themselves with hunting for internal inconsistencies in his story. How readily would any of us have spotted them?

It is not merely a matter of information about faraway countries or unfamiliar ethnicities. Even textual analysis of the kind that literary scholars now practice for a living can be riddled with problems. We know that anachronisms, for instance, are usually disqualifying: if a text purporting to be from the third century refers to something that did not exist until the tenth, or if a putatively fifteenth-century English text uses a word not coined until the eighteenth, we can say with confidence it is a fake. Even that judgment, though, is more complex, more fraught, than it sounds. Many debates over authenticity played out before a public ill qualified to judge them. Only the tiniest minority of Malone's readers, for example, had any experience with the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century documents he introduced into the disputations about Thomas Chatterton and William Henry Ireland, and virtually no English readers were prepared to enter the debate over Ossian's Erse grammar and style.

Chatterton is the richest mine of literary anachronisms used to invalidate a spurious work of literature. He composed putatively fifteenth-century poetry and attributed the works to one Thomas Rowley.[9] He gave Rowley's poems an air of antiquity by peppering them with obsolete words, most of which he found in the glossaries to editions of early poets and in dictionaries like Stephen Skinner's *Etymologicon Linguoe Anglicanoe*.[10] He also artificially aged modern words by cloaking them in pseudo-antique spellings. It is easy to be cynical about his approach to old orthography: take your text; double every consonant that can be doubled; change *i*'s to *y*'s and vice versa; sprinkle silent *e*'s liberally; be a little more sparing with silent *h*'s. But it is not far wrong. (Ireland, whose pseudo-Shakespearean forgeries appeared a quarter-century after Chatterton's, was much influenced by the boy from Bristol, and his altered *Hamlet*, with its ‘Toe bee orre notte toe bee’, captures the Chattertonian spirit, as many of his critics were quick to point out.)

9 The standard life remains Meyerstein; *Groom's Thomas Chatterton and Romantic Culture* is the best collection of critical responses.

10 Tyrwhitt was the first to note Chatterton's debt to the dictionary of 1671: ‘Whoever will take pains to examine these interpretations [in the glossary] will find, that they are almost all taken from SKINNER's Etymologicon Linguae Anglicanae’ (Chatterton, *Poems*, 324).

Chatterton's ineptitude in handling the old vocabulary and orthography convinced many skeptics that Rowley was a fake, and that Chatterton had tried to pass off his own pastiche as authentically late-medieval. As Thomas Warton observed, 'As to internal arguments, an unnatural affectation of antient spelling and of obsolete words, not belonging to the period assigned to the poems, strikes us at first sight'.[11] As the story is usually told today, that was a fairly straightforward judgment; we accept Warton's 'at first sight' and assume that any intelligent reader should have been able to spot Chatterton's telltale orthographical manipulation. We typically divide the early partisans into two camps: the sages who, looking at the texts with open eyes, came to the inevitable conclusion that they were fakes; and the dupes who, blinded by some ulterior motive or character flaw, somehow persisted in their credulity even when every bit of evidence proved Rowley's poems fraudulent.

An on-the-ground view, however, shows us that it was never so clear-cut. It was possible for reasonably intelligent critics to look at the Rowleian texts and see not a single problem. As Robert Glynn, one of Rowley's early defenders, put it, 'If these Poems were forged by an ignorant Boy it is certainly very Extraordinary that they shoud [*sic*] not contain a single Anachronism or the slightest Mistake as to History or Chronology, the Manners and Customs of those Remote times &c &c'.[12] That would be very extraordinary - from our vantage point, though, Chatterton's texts are positively loaded with anachronisms and mistakes as to history, chronology, manners, and customs. Still, we should resist the urge to look at Glynn and his like as buffoons. Glynn may not have been a towering intellect, but neither was he a dunce. He won Cambridge's Seatonian Prize and was elected a fellow of the College of Physicians at London. Truth be told, his mental acuity was probably at least the equal of any of us. If he, and many others like him, could look at the Rowleian poems and see none of the supposed glaring inconsistencies that we convince ourselves we see, then perhaps they were not really so glaring as we imagine. We have an unfair advantage when we consider the case: we already know the answer.

Consider, too, the problem of circular argument that haunts arguments over investigations of anachronistic vocabulary. I say I discovered this English

11 Warton, *History of English Poetry*, 2:155.
12 Lort, *Chattertoniana*, fol. 151v

document, an authentic manuscript of the early seventeenth century; you say I wrote it myself last week. You, armed with the *Oxford English Dictionary*, point to words in it that we know entered the language decades after my proposed date. It seems to demolish my claims. My document contains words that were not in use around 1600, so it cannot be authentic. I am guilty of either fraud or gullibility. Score one for the skeptics.

But I can say that my newly discovered document is itself the evidence that those questioned words were in use in the early seventeenth century. The cogency of this line of argument becomes clear if we apply the anachronism test to a document we know to be genuine. Suppose the text I had the great fortune to discover was Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, a play entirely unknown before my find. I show up waving the manuscript and proclaiming it a work of genius from 1604. You, less credulous, quote a passage from my play - 'When sorrowes come, they come [...] in battalians: [...] her Father slaine, [...] your sonne gone, [...] the people muddied Thick and vnwholsome in thoughts' - and you point out that the verb *to muddy* was not used until 1652, in John Smith's *Select Discourses*. You also quote 'So oft it chaunces in particuler men, [...] By their ore-grow'th of some complextion', and note that *overgrowth* was not used until 1667, when it appeared in *Paradise Lost*. You quote 'And now no soyle nor cautell doth besmirch/The vertue of his will', and say *besmirch* is not attested before about 1700 - and even then, it was in Percy's *Reliques*, unpublished until 1765. You press the case: the document I am touting simply could not have come from 1604; it must have been composed long after Shakespeare died. I am guilty of either fraud or gullibility.

In fact the argument, while entirely wrong on the facts, is formally perfectly sound, and every bit as convincing as many of the arguments that were used to destroy Chatterton's claims to authenticity. If *Hamlet* had not been around to provide the first citations in the *OED*, this would indeed be the state of our knowledge. If we define 'anachronism' as 'something that had not been done by the supposed date of origin', how can we distinguish that from a legitimate first citation? The more lexically inventive the author, the more likely our tools are to show him or her to be a fraud. There are 2,269 words in the *OED* with their first citation from Chaucer, 1,721 from Shakespeare, and 673 from Milton; if we expanded our search to include not just new words but new senses of words, all three figures would be well into the thousands. Surely no authors so loaded with violations of chronology could be authentic - and out go all the major writers from the canon. By injudiciously applying the

techniques that successfully revealed Ossian and Rowley as fakes, we could ‘prove’ that virtually every great work is fraudulent.

Comparable difficulties apply to the arguments over orthography. When Edmond Malone criticized Ireland's amateurish attempts to make his words look old, he noted that the spelling ‘is not only not the orthography of Elizabeth, or of her time, but is for the most part the orthography of no age whatsoever’.[13] But one of the defenders of the Ireland papers, Matthew Wyatt, came back with a good objection: ‘The orthography of that age was [...] little reducible to any fixed standard. [...] But that a vast superfluity of letters is generally observable, no man at all conversant with antient writings can doubt’. He then laid out two pages of authentic manuscript spellings like *farre* and *oppenned*, adding, ‘It is unnecessary to swell this publication, or to tire the reader with more numerous examples of what no one can doubt’.[14] Samuel Ireland, William's father, made the same argument: ‘As the orthography was then quite unfixed - I think it will be no easy matter to point out by what rule any individual could set down, & be governed by any fashion or mode of spelling’.[15] For Malone, as for many of Ireland's and Chatterton's critics, the faux-antique spellings are evidence of anachronism. For Wyatt, as for many of Ireland's and Chatterton's defenders, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were times of so much orthographical variability that no ‘fashion or mode of spelling’ can be determinative. How, then, do we settle the dispute?

New discoveries always call for some degree of skepticism, and any time we are asked to revise conventional wisdom, we should do so only after deliberation. Some anachronisms are more damning than others. Malone, for instance, blasts W.H. Ireland for the line ‘Each titled dame deserts her rolls and tea’, noting that he had ‘introduc[ed] our fragrant Chinese beverage’ decades too early: although the Dutch were drinking tea early in the seventeenth century, it took until the 1660s for the English to catch up.[16] And of course particularly outrageous anachronisms should tip us off; Woody Allen wrote a story about the discovery of a new set of Dead Sea Scrolls whose authenticity has been questioned by a few scholars because of the occasional appearance of the word *Oldsmobile*.[17] We recognize certain classes of words as more

13 Malone, *Inquiry*, 33.
14 Wyatt, *A Comparative Review*, 19-21.
15 Damuel Ireland to Parr, 6 Feb. 1796, in BL Add. MS 30346, fol. 176r.
16 Malone, *An Inquiry*, 100 n. The passage appears nowhere in the published or surviving manuscript Shakespeare papers, and Malone claims to have received his text from ‘a Gentleman who was intimately acquainted with the possessor of these treasures’. Whether Ireland was ever actually guilty of that anachronism is unclear: he denies having written those lines in his *Confessions*, 76.
17 Allen, ‘The Scrolls’, 21

convincing evidence of anachronism than others, though formulating a clear set of rules about those words would be a significant challenge.

But we should pause again - even if we could formulate and agree on rules for distinguishing legitimate first uses from anachronisms, eighteenth-century critics simply did not have the necessary tools at hand. As late as 1857, Richard Chenevix Trench was lamenting the absence of a proper historical dictionary of the English language, and the product of his complaint, the first edition of *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, later known as the *Oxford English Dictionary*, was not complete until 1928. Things were even slower in other European languages: although the *Deutsches Wörterbuch* of the Brothers Grimm was begun in 1838, long before the *OED*, it was not completed until 1961, and the great *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* was the work of five generations, from 1864 to 1998. Anyone in the eighteenth century who wanted to know when a word was first used had nowhere to turn.

When they wanted to make claims about anachronism, then, eighteenth-century critics were obliged to rely on their memories, and critics like Edmond Malone and Thomas Warton were often forced to make broad claims of the form 'Such a word was not found in the fifteenth century' based only on their personal scholarly authority. Malone, for instance, insisted that Ireland's spellings were consistent with no era in English linguistic history, and answered Wyatt's concern about orthographical variability in Early Modern English by claiming to have read all there was to read: 'From the time of Henry the Fourth, I have perused, I will not say several hundred deeds and other MSS., and I never once found the copulative *and* spelt as it is here, with a final *e*'.[18] The gauntlet was thrown down: *never once found* the spelling *ande*. Ireland's defender, George Chalmers, was quick to reply:

> He challenges *all comers* to show, that *and* was never spelt with a final *e*, as it is in Elizabeth's epistle to Shakspeare. [...] This is, no doubt, a long life (from the time of Henry IV) of painful perusal, but not successful search! Among the black-letter books, which he has, carefully, collected, he has not, it seems, the very black-letter book, which contains, not indeed some thousands, but several *ands* with the final *e*. Here are two, in a short passage: 'And*e* y I have not that repentaunce, even from the bottome of my herte, and*e* beleve not that I am forgeven for Chrystes sake, as aforesayde.[19]

18 Malone, *Inquiry*, 33

19 Chalmers, *An Apology for the Believers*, 79

We now have sixteenth-century examples of *and* with an *e*. Does this mean Malone was wrong when he called anachronism? - does it mean he was wrong when he called fake? Once again, we should consider it not from the point of view of someone studying a known deception, but of someone who does not yet know whether something is or is not true. To approach a puzzle like this with the correct answer in mind, and to assume anyone who reached the wrong answer was exceptionally deficient, is to do an injustice both to the believers and to history itself.

Without the benefit of reliable historical dictionaries, eighteenth-century critics often made historical claims about modes of expression and poetic form - poetic form, versification, registers of diction - and those are much more difficult to quantify. Malone actually puts metrical concerns first in his list of subjects on which he plans to challenge Chatterton:

> I will confine my observations to these four points. 1. The versification of the poems attributed to Rowley. 2. The imitations of modern authours that are found in them. 3. The anachronisms with which they abound. 4. The hand-writing of the Mss.-the parchments, &c.[20]

Concerns like meter have been largely neglected in modern discussions of fakes: when we comment on eighteenth-century arguments over anachronism, we tend to focus on things like the dates when words entered the language, because we now have reasonably reliable information on these matters. But the actual eighteenth-century disputes merit more attention than they have received.

Jacob Bryant, for instance, makes a very typical claim about the historical development of versification, and what it can tell us about the likelihood that the Rowley poems were composed in the fifteenth century:

> Many have maintained, that if these poems were of the date supposed, and if poetry had been so much improved, it would never have fallen off afterwards: as there would have been a standard for future composition. The lines in Rowley for the most part terminate with the true accent: and seldom close with words of three or four syllables, as is observable in other poets of that century. This excellence, say they, being once established, would have been copied by subsequent writers. But herein, I think, there is much uncertainty: and whoever proceeds upon these principles, may form a very wrong judgment: for this rule of determination is certainly very precarious.[21]

20 Malone, *Cursory Observations*, 3
21 Bryant, *Observations*, 427.

Bryant has what strikes modern sensibilities as a strangely ahistorical conception of versification: there is such a thing as a ‘true accent’, and Rowley is said to have achieved it centuries before literary history tells us it was common. But whether or not there is an absolutely superior poetic mode, Bryant uses the notion for historicist purposes by teasing out the implication of many discussions: had such an advance been made in the fifteenth century, there would be evidence of it in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Bryant's concern is not at all idiosyncratic, and Chatterton's meter was one of the central concerns in debates over the authenticity of the Rowley poems. Many periodical writers noted that the excellence of the versification was the first indication of fraud in the works of Rowley: ‘On our first opening these Poems’, the writer for the *Monthly Review* observed, ‘the smooth style of the harmony, the easy march of the verse, the regular station of the caesura, the structure of the phrase, and the case and complexion of the thoughts, made us presently conclude they were *Mock Ruins*’.[22] Malone too pointed to the ‘smoothness of the versification’, which is for him the ‘first and principal objection to the antiquity of these poems’. Even if his poetry is ‘disfigured by old spelling’, Chatterton's verse flows ‘as smoothly as any of Pope's’, and that, for Malone, is ‘a matter difficult to be got over’.[23]

No one was more committed to this line of argument than Horace Walpole, conventionally, albeit unfairly, cast as the villain in the Chatterton story. He was one of many to raise the biggest question in the dispute over the authenticity of Rowley's poems:

> An amazing genius for poetry, which one of them possessed, might flash out in the darkest age - but could Rowley anticipate the phraseology of the eighteenth century? His poetic fire might burst through the obstacles of the times; like Homer or other original bards, he might have formed a poetical style - but would it have been precisely that of an age subsequent of his own by some hundred years? Nobody can admire the poetry of the poems in question more than I do - but except being better than most modern verses, in what do they differ in the construction?[24]

‘I told him also’, Walpole wrote, ‘that I had communicated his transcripts to much better judges, and that they were by no means satisfied with the authenticity of his supposed MSS. I mentioned their reasons, particularly that

22 *Monthly Review* 56 (April 1777) 256.
23 Malone, *Cursory Observations*, 3.
24 Walpole's annotations to Chatterton's *Poems*, 97.

there were no such metres known to the age of Richard I - and that might be a reason with Chatterton himself to shift the era of his productions'.[25]

Rowley's defenders, like Bryant, had to address the too-good-to-be-true prosodic mastery - and even Bryant was obliged to admit 'I have had my scruples upon this head'. He was left with a not very convincing appeal to rule-transcending genius: although Rowley's versification was better than anything else yet discovered in the fifteenth century, still, 'In every age there will be a difference among writers; and whatever number of poets there may be found, it is a great chance, but there will be some one person more eminent than the rest'.[26]

And so to the peroration. I conclude with three things I am not saying, and the one I am. First, I am not saying that, because it is difficult to apply these techniques, there is no difference between truth and falsehood - quite the opposite. I accept without demur that the poems attributed to the fifteenth-century Rowley were in fact written by the eighteenth-century Chatterton; I believe the third-century epics attributed to Ossian were mostly an eighteenth-century pastiche by James Macpherson; I am not trying to convince anyone that Psalmanazar was really from Formosa. We have, as far as I can determine, discovered the truth about these matters, and it seems our scholarly consensus on the facts is correct. (Of course there are still some cases where we have not achieved consensus.) Neither, on the other hand, do I want to discourage the postmodern interrogations of what authenticity means to us: it is only fair to question whether our culture's ideas of deception are adequate for dealing with all the complexities of true and false representation. There is a time to play the part of jesting Pilate and demand 'What is truth?'

Finally, I do not want to encourage pyrrhonism, a creeping skepticism and the suspicion that *everything* may be fraudulent. Doubt can become corrosive. Nineteenth-century attempts to write histories of the development of early English poetry in the wake of high-profile fakers of older English literature like Macpherson, Chatterton, and Ireland are haunted by a fear of being caught by fraud. The fear is so intense that the history is often written almost in the subjunctive - at one degree of remove from reality. So many positive claims are prefaced with 'Should this discovery prove genuine' or 'If Professor So-and-So is correct in his attribution', with the result that very little gets said. We should not be so timid that we say nothing at all.

25 Walpole to Bewley, cited in Walpole, *Correspondence*, 16:112.
26 Bryant, *Observations*, 425-6.

But we should be aware of the dangers of beginning with the fact that the lies we study are in fact lies. Our stories of exposed liars too often assume the matter was fairly simple and straightforward, but that was not always the case. Over and over again, an ostensibly definitive exposure of a fraud was not in fact convincing to contemporaries, and probably should not be to us. Those who think about deception should therefore spare a thought for those who were thrust into the midst of a dispute and charged with distinguishing the true from the false, and be more sympathetic to the plight of the dupe. That will require us to shed our smug confidence in the superiority of the present - a vulgar kind of literary-historical Whiggism, in which we enlightened moderns would not make the mistakes of our benighted eighteenth-century forebears.

It has often been noted that, if we consider the lie as a literary kind, we know only the inferior examples of that genre. The best fakes, the successful ones, are not recognized as fakes at all - we still think they're genuine, and therefore exclude them from our canon of 'spuriosities'. No other literary genre has that distinction: imagine if the only epics we knew were the failed ones, or if we knew only the unsuccessful plays. And though I do not have the temerity to identify them, it is nearly certain that there are fakes and frauds still in our canon. We have probably all taught and done research on works that some later age will regard as not merely fraudulent, but self-evidently fraudulent. We need, then, a degree of modesty, an all-too-rare scholarly virtue. It does no justice to historical episodes of deception to gloss over the complications of the original investigations that have enabled us to classify them with other deceptions. Better to imagine approaching the question of deception without the handy checklist of lies we get from the simple accident that we were born in the twentieth century rather than the seventeenth or eighteenth.

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The art of the preface: cultivating truth in eighteenth-century travel writing

Anne M. Thell

Early eighteenth-century British travel writers tend to profess their veracity and their aims to foster public knowledge in uniquely urgent terms. Such professions come to define what might be considered a micro-genre: the paratextual materials - e.g., epistles dedicatory, prefaces, and introductions - that develop in tandem with the century's diverse and prolific genre of travel writing. It is in these prefatory comments that writers most directly state their aims and methods, as well as their attitudes towards the representational traditions they engage. Fascinatingly, then, these peripheral commentaries are not peripheral at all in that they provide a relatively direct theory of travel writing and truth-telling that emerges across the eighteenth century. The preambles I outline here suggest that the questions of veracity that plague British travel writing throughout its long history come to a head in the early eighteenth century, as authors become intensely self-conscious and prolix in their attempts to promise truth and legitimize their methods to readers.

Introduction

By the early eighteenth century, voyage literature peaked as one of the two most popular forms of writing in England (the other being religious writing).[1] Booksellers and writers alike seized upon this genre as a means of reaching a wide audience of readers who were hungry for new information about farflung regions of the globe. Truth-telling is, of course, a primary concern of travel writing, particularly in the early eighteenth century as disciplines were emerging and differentiating, and this widely read genre had a direct and far-reaching influence on how writers cultivated truth in narrative. Specifically, travel writing helped shape modern standards of truth-telling and credibility in both scientific and literary domains. Indeed, when we read the travel genre in the context of the debates about authority and truth that dominated almost every field of inquiry in the eighteenth century - from science to religion to the nascent field of aesthetics - we can see more clearly that questions about truth and its constitution dominate the travel writing of the period. Nowhere is this more visible, I suggest here, than in the prefaces and introductions to

1 James Kelly notes that William Dampier's *A New Voyage Round the World* (1697) marks the ascendance of the travel genre: 'Dampier's narrative [...] engendered competition, imitation, and invention on such a scale that within two decades voyages peaked as one of the most sought-after forms of polite literature in Britain besides religious writing' (158). See 'Bordering on Fact in Early Eighteenth-Century Sea Journals'

travel accounts, which provide space for authors to discuss their views on truth and their methods for producing it. In this paper, originally delivered at the Werkgroep 18e eeuw's 'The Art of Lying' conference (January, 2014), I want to look more closely at these prefatory materials to see what they tell us about the context for and the cultivation of truth in the early eighteenth century.

Early eighteenth-century British travel writers tend to profess their veracity and their aims to foster public knowledge in uniquely urgent terms. Such professions come to define what might be considered a micro-genre: the paratextual materials - e.g., epistles dedicatory, prefaces, and introductions - that develop in tandem with the century's diverse and prolific genre of travel writing. It is in these prefatory comments that writers most directly state their aims and methods, as well as their attitudes towards the representational traditions they engage. Fascinatingly, then, these peripheral commentaries are not peripheral at all, as they provide a relatively direct theory of travel writing and truth-telling that emerges across the eighteenth century.[2] As such, these materials have a history of their own, while they also have important applications to other, related discourses, such as the novel and natural history. My main goal in this paper is to illustrate that the prefatory apparatuses that accompany travel writing make up an important archive that merits much more attention than it currently receives.

The preambles that I outline below - dating from the 1690s to the 1750s - suggest that the questions of historicity (i.e., that a certain voyage or event actually happened) and veracity (i.e., that an author faithfully relates the voyage or event) that plague British travel writing throughout its long history come to a head in the early eighteenth century, as the cultivation of an objective style becomes of paramount importance to writers of both 'real' and 'realistic' accounts.[3] Regardless whether the following account consists of inventory or invention, introductions allow eighteenth-century travel writers to discuss their contributions to 'that general Magazine' of 'useful knowledge' and to guarantee

2 More than 25 years ago, Michael McKeon suggested that the Royal Society of London's instructions for travelers that were released in the 1660s 'provide a remarkable instance of how critical and theoretical discourse develops alongside, and in relation to, the development of literary discourse'. In this way, the Society's directives triggered an 'intercourse between "official" sponsorship and the responses of travelers and interested commentators'. See *Origins*, 101-102. While many subsequent scholars have examined the Society's guidelines for travelers and their impact on British travel writing, none to my knowledge have studied how the genre's copious prefatory materials function in a similar manner.

3 I should note that *objective* and *subjective* are anachronistic terms when used to discuss the early eighteenth century. In this essay, I study early iterations of these concepts that predate the terms themselves. For a more nuanced history of scientific objectivity that locates modern notions of the term in the early nineteenth century, see Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*.

'severe, full and punctuall Truth'.[4] Of course, an objective style of narration is no less rhetorical than other styles - in fact, as these authors demonstrate, it takes a great deal of effort to create and sustain. Moreover, as the formal indicators of detached, objective narration become recognizable to the reading public, creating certain expectations as to how truth should be formatted, they also become more vulnerable to satire and imitation. Eighteenth-century readers are quick to parody promises of truth and to hijack them to suit other, subversive ends. In this way, travel prefaces and introductions become a kind of epistemological battlefield where the criteria for cultivating, maintaining, and transmitting truth - through a variety of tactics I discuss below - are formulated, tested, and systematized.

Several recent historians of knowledge have discussed the significant epistemological changes of the early eighteenth century, as well as the shifting criteria for producing truth across this period.[5] Similarly, such scholars as Mary Poovey and Barbara Shapiro have examined the emergence of facts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, while Lorraine Daston has documented the emergence of scientific objectivity across the early modern era.[6] But while these historians of knowledge have gestured towards the importance of travel and travel writing to the development of modern notions of truth, few have studied the discourse of travel head on. Moreover, while literary scholars have become increasingly attuned to the importance of eighteenth-century travel writing, much of their focus remains, understandably, on issues of cultural encounter.[7]

In general, scholars rarely concentrate on how travel writers contribute to emerging ideas about veracity, despite the fact that we routinely cite travel writing as a primary site for the development of both scientific and literary standards of truth. Even more rarely do scholars focus on travel writing's copious prefatory materials, which are central to the early eighteenth century's

4 For the first two quotations in the sentence, see Dampier, sig. A2r-v. For the second, see *Philosophical Transactions* 11, 552.

5 Many scholars attribute to the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries a decisive shift away from Aristotelian universals and traditional forms of knowledge and towards the observation of discrete particulars. For example, see Daston, 'Baconian Facts'; Dear, *Discipline and Experience*; Olson, *The Emergence of the Social Sciences*; Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact*; and Shapin, *A Social History of Truth*. Shapin famously links the production of truth to gentlemanly conduct and civility in late seventeenth-century scientific circles. See also McKeon, *Origins*, particularly 68-73 and 100-18.

6 See Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact*, and Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact*. On objectivity, see Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*. See also Daston, '"Objectivity"'.

7 Still today, one of the best accounts of travel writing and epistemology appears in one brief section of McKeon's 1987 *Origins* (100-28), where McKeon outlines how travel writing contributed to the formulation of new types of scientific and aesthetic truth and, ultimately, to the English novel. Throughout this essay, I am indebted to McKeon's foundational work regarding epistemic and generic change.

debates about authority, experience, and individual testimony. Below, I examine a representative set of prefaces and introductions to demonstrate how the period's travel writers grapple with questions of truth and legitimate knowledge. While I do not pretend to offer a conclusive study, I do wish to illustrate how rich and important these materials are and how lucidly they register persistent and contentious questions about truth across the eighteenth century.

The 'air of truth apparent'

Travel writers were regarded with great suspicion in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England; one oft-repeated proverb stipulated that 'travelers lied by authority'.[8] At the same time, however, new standards for travel writing were instituted in the 1660s by the Royal Society of London to guarantee the production of travel facts.[9] These standards included eyewitness observation, strict record-keeping in journals and diaries, a plain writing style 'without specious tropes and figures' (in the words of Thomas Sprat), and measurement through the use of scientific instruments.[10] Though these empirical guidelines had a significant influence on how travel writers formatted their experiences in narrative (accounting at least in part for the surge in scientific travel writing in the first half of the eighteenth century), they also muddled questions of truth even further.[11] Many writers began constructing their accounts according to empirical standards, regardless of the empirical status of their productions, which in combination with the inaccessibility of the regions described made it nearly impossible for the reading public to decipher fact from fiction, or truth from lies. This uncertainty regarding the truth-status of travel texts helped fuel a general culture of suspicion, and these distrustful readers, as Jonathan Lamb has outlined, in turn made it even harder for travelers to profess veracity in

8 There are various versions of this proverb - for instance, Daniel Beeckman notes in 1718: 'It is a common Saying, *That Old Men and Travellers do give themselves great Liberty in relating fictitious and improbable Stories*'. See *Voyage*, sig. A5r-v.

9 On how facts became a dominant epistemological category in the early modern era, see Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact*, and Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact*. While Shapiro traces facts to late seventeenth-century legal discourse, Poovey links the emergence of facts to the development of double-entry book-keeping and political arithmetic.

10 Sprat, *History*, 112. For examples of scientific travel guidelines, see *Boyle*, 'General Heads', and Rooke, 'Directions for Sea-men'.

11 McKeon notes that the Royal Society's encouragement 'was by no means responsible, in itself', for the popularity of travel narratives after the Restoration, but nevertheless there emerges 'an entire spectrum of printed, first-person [travel] narratives [...] all preoccupied with the question of their own historicity and how it might be authenticated'. On the subsequent difficulty in distinguishing 'true' accounts, he comments: '[O]ne paradoxical effect of the early modern epistemological revolution is, by sufficiently discrediting the very idea of imaginary voyages, to obscure rather than sharpen the distinction between narratives of "real' and of "imaginary" travels'. See *Origins*, 101 and 105.

their writing.[12]

To assure their audiences of their reliability and exactness, British travel writers of the early eighteenth century employed various rhetorical strategies, many of which became recognizable enough to merit parody and imitation. Easily the most important travel narrative of the first half of the eighteenth century - one that features one of the era's most intriguing preambles - is William Dampier's *New Voyage Round the World*, which was published in collaboration with the Royal Society in 1697. Promising new information about distant regions and several famous privateering ventures, Dampier's account was an instant best-seller and appeared in multiple editions and compendiums over the next several decades.[13] Yet despite the astonishing success of *A New Voyage*, and despite the fact that the account sets the narrative standards for countless other travelogues that appear in its wake, Dampier himself shows a considerable amount of uncertainty in composing his account, particularly when it comes to matters of truth and the cultivation of an objective style. In his lengthy preface, Dampier explains that his account includes relations of places unknown to the reading public, and thus he positions himself as a public servant rather than a privateer.[14] Savvily, too, he distinguishes himself from 'the traveller' who is 'fond of telling stories', thereby distancing his account from those of suspect authenticity. Dampier's terminology regarding his modest writing skills - his 'narrow sphere and poor abilities' - functions as a common rhetorical device that advertises the plain style of a simple and artless observer, which serves to verify the truth of his text (an example of what McKeon describes as the plain observer guaranteeing his own results).[15]

In this same preface, however, Dampier shows an acute awareness of the tension between the articulation of discrete particulars that makes up natural history and the relation of autobiographical narrative. Indeed, while he strives to outline a scientific methodology for travel writing, in doing so, he repeatedly encounters the inherent problems of what Michel de Certeau has called 'scientific narrativity'.[16] That is, forced both to document nature and stage this documentation in narrative, Dampier comes to realize that composing a

12 See Lamb, *Preserving the Self*, 49-75 and 84-88.

13 *New Voyage* appeared in February 1697 and went into its third edition by the end of that year; there were five editions by 1705, in addition to the many collections that incorporated parts of the text. For details, see Edwards, *Story of the Voyage*, 17, and Williams, *Great South Sea*, 116.

14 The rest of this paragraph and the subsequent one discussing Dampier are modified versions of those that appeared originally in my article, 'Dampier's "Mixt Relation"'. See Bibliography for details.

15 Dampier, *New Voyage*, sig. A2r and A2v. McKeon, *Origins*, 114.

16 De Certeau in 'Travel Narratives' describes scientific narrativity as a process that necessarily includes both a 'staging' (a performance of methods) and an 'ordering' (a discourse), or a combination of exemplary practices and their 'figurations in a literary space-time'. See 'Travel Narratives', 222.

travelogue involves much more than simple record-keeping. As he goes on to explain, his work 'is composed of a mixt Relation of Places, and Actions, in the same order of time in which they occurred'.[17] The term 'mixt Relation' indicates that Dampier considers the categories of 'Places' and 'Actions' as somehow separate or incommensurable. It becomes clear in the preface that by 'Actions', Dampier refers to the autobiographical descriptions of events and experiences, the progression forwards in time, causes and eventual outcomes (what we might see as the horizontal movement of his main voyage narrative). By 'Paces', Dampier refers to the description of places and things or the natural history (what we can see as the vertical movement away from the first-person voyage narrative). To underscore this disconnect, Dampier explains separately his editorial methods for each category. Throughout his reasoning process in his preface, Dampier seems to recognize the need to link his natural history to a larger narrative context, but he is uncertain how to justify this need in empirical terms. At the heart of Dampier's struggles with his own text are underlying questions about the epistemology of travel writing: Can a travel writer document a purely factual account of his journey? Should a travelogue provide natural history that is contingent upon, or separate from, individual experience? Do idiosyncratic details guarantee or undermine the truth-status of a travel account?

Several other travelers of the same era deal with similar problems of representation, many in similar ways. Just two years after *A New Voyage* was published, Dampier's shipmate Lionel Wafer released his account of part of their voyage, *A New Voyage Round the World... and Description of The Isthmus of America* (1699). Wafer's account is even more disjointed than Dampier's, and he encounters even more difficulty integrating the narrative aspects of his text with the descriptive and observational ones. In his epistle to the reader, Wafer tries to justify these abrupt narrative breaks, but he, too, is ultimately uncertain about how to organize his text, and, more largely, about whether or not he is telling the truth or whether it will be accepted as such.[18] Renowned botanist John Ray raises many of the same narrative and epistemological concerns in his *Observations Topographical, Moral, & Physiological; Made in a Journey Through part of the Low-Countries* (1673). In his comparatively short preface, Ray explains that he desired to publish 'a

17 Dampier, *New Voyage*, sig. A3r.

18 For more on Wafer, see Frohock, 'Tattoos and Nose Rings'. Frohock argues that Wafer's combination of 'tatic description and autobiographical narrative' is essential to his 'self-fashioning and ethnographic authority' (28).

Catalogue of all not native to England' for 'the satisfaction of the curious', though he immediately qualifies this claim: 'But considering the paucity of those who delight in studies and enquiries of this nature, to advantage the Catalogue I have added thereto a brief Narrative of our whole Voyage'.[19] Once again separating facts of nature from narrative, Ray promises that 'what I write as of mine own knowledge is punctually and in all circumstances true, at least according to my apprehension and judgment, I not giving myself that liberty which many Travellers are wont to take, and the common Proverb seems to allow them'.[20] Yet Ray also acknowledges that he includes snippets 'from the Relation of others', which 'though I will not warrant it for certain, yet to me it seemed most likely and probable'.[21] In sum, Ray conflates first- and secondhand knowledge, self-evident truth and judgment, while he also demonstrates the same uncertainty regarding the management of those autobiographical and natural historical vectors that seem to need constant tending in the scientific travel writing of the period.

Even the distinguished Hans Sloane - physician and eventual president of the Royal Society of London - shows considerable uncertainty in describing his account and in connecting his narrative to his natural histories. He opens his *Voyage To ... Jamaica* (1707) with a 12-page preface and a 150-page introduction (longwinded even by Dampier's standards). Interestingly, Sloane uses his preface to respond to questions about the usefulness of travel writing: 'It may be ask'd me to what Purposes serve such Accounts', he speculates, and then responds: 'I answer, that the Knowledge of *Natural-History*, being Observations of Matters of Fact, is more certain than most Others'.[22] Ostensibly, Sloane sees himself laying down simple 'Matters of Fact' that are less susceptible to error and more enduring than mere opinions. In an intriguingly defensive move that illustrates, among other things, how quickly theory develops along with practice in the travel canon, Sloane ends his preface by bolstering himself against possible detractors. He explains:

19 Ray, *Observations*, sig. A5v.
20 Ibid., sig. A5v.
21 Ibid., sig. A5v-A6r. Lifting material from previous sources was common in travel writing well into the eighteenth century. E.g., Robert Knox, famous captive and author of the best-selling *An Historical Relation of the Island Ceylon*, writes: 'In all which I take leave to Declare, That I have writ nothing but either what I am assured of by my own personal Knowledge to be true, [...] or what I have received from the inhabitants themselves of such things as are commonly known to be true among them'. See Knox, sig. bv.
22 Shane, *Voyage*, sig. B1v

> I have been so conversant in Matters of this nature for several Years, that I know 'tis impossible to escape the Censure of several sorts of Men, as the Envious and Malitious, who wilt, I am sure, spare no Pains to find Faults; those who strive to make ridiculous anything of this kind, and think themselves great Wits, but are very Ignorant.[23]

Taking issue, no doubt, with 'Wits' like William King and Ned Ward (both of whom I discuss below), Sloane charges naysayers who 'make ridiculous anything of this kind' with hampering the grand progress of human knowledge.

Telling the truth is never quite so simple, however, and Sloane himself has difficulty organizing 'Matters of Fact' for his readers. While Sloane's preface discusses the utility of travel texts, his 'Introduction' describes the history of European encounters with the region and its natural history, and then catalogues the various ailments and injuries he encountered in the Americas (a gruesome inventory that runs for more than sixty pages) - all this before he begins his brief, 47-page 'Voyage to Jamaica'.[24] Sloane, of course, was most interested in natural history and medicine, and he had considerable demands on his time, but these facts make it all the more intriguing that he relegates his important medical inventory to the 'Introduction'. The contrast between the extravagant prefatory materials and the perfunctory voyage narrative indicates, I think, that Sloane felt compelled to include a travel narrative in a bid to authenticate his experiences. In effect, then, Sloane illustrates once again that there is no consensus about how scientific histories and personal narrative are related, but also that personal experience is starting to be seen as incongruous with or even corrosive to scientific writing.

It is not only scientific travelers who struggle to promise truth to their readers: Commercial privateers like Woodes Rogers and Edward Cooke are equally perplexed by the art of professing veracity. In their competing accounts of their joint privateering venture released just six months apart in 1712, Rogers and Cooke both labor to maintain the veneer of objectivity.[25] In his introduction, Rogers focuses on his good character and his reluctance to publish: 'I was not fond to appear in Print', he explains, 'but the Solicitations of my Friends who had read my Journal, and the mistaken Reports that were spread abroad of our Voyage, prevail'd with me at last to publish it'. Though

23 Ibid., sig. C2v.

24 Sloane's second volume was not released until 1725, and consists of an 18-page introduction and 'The Natural History of Jamaica'.

25 See Cooke, *A Voyage to the South Sea*, and Rogers, *A Cruising Voyage*. Both texts were avidly sought after because they described several rare English privateering successes - the taking of a Spanish galleon, the sacking of Guayaquil, and the seizure of Spanish sailing charts - as well as the retrieval of famed castaway Alexander Selkirk. For more on Rogers, truth-telling, and genre, see Pearl, 'Woodes Rogers'.

he promises authenticity through first-hand witnessing, he is also forced to explain the incorporation of various other texts:

> I know 'tis generally expected, that when far distant Voyages are printed, they should contain new and wonderful Discoveries [...] but this Voyage being only design'd for cruising on the Enemy, it is not reasonable to expect such an Account here [...] But I have [...] quoted Authors [I know well]; which I did not insert at random, but when I found them to agree with the Relations of those who had been in the Places.

Finally, taking the tack of a competent seaman rather than a rhetorician, Rogers points out that he 'had not time, were it my Talent, to polish the Stile; nor do I think it necessary for a Mariner's Journal'.[26] Here again this final emphasis on his plain 'Stile' and lack of polish is meant to guarantee immediacy and accuracy: we have a simple mariner writing simple truths, without guile or ulterior motives.

Roger's colleague Cooke discusses his 'unpolish'd Productions' in a complementary fashion in his introduction.[27] On the accuracy of his account, he comments:

> As to the Journal itself, the Reader may be assur'd it was exactly kept all the Time we were Aboard, and that I cannot presume to impose any Thing beyond the Strictness of Truth, as well in Regard it would be no Advantage to me, as [...] there are so many Witnesses to be found to every circumstance mention'd in it.[28]

However, this 'Strictness of Truth' is complicated when he too admits that he lifted many descriptions from other authors:

> Our Historical Relations are collected from the best Authors who have treated those Parts [...] I thought it absolutely requisite to intersperse the said Descriptions and Relations in the Journal, for the Information and Entertainment of the Reader.[29]

Assembled from an array of competing texts, and formatted according to what the reader might or might not desire, Cooke's self-evident truth is not so self-evident after all.

26 Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, xv-xvi.
27 Cooke, 'Dedication', sig. a3v.
28 Ibid., sig. b7v.
29 Ibid., sig. b8r.

Hijacking travel prefaces

One can see that these prolonged and often unconvincing attestations of truth would prove natural targets for satirists of the period. One such critic is William King, who targets both the form and content of these introductions in the second installment of his *Useful Transactions* (1709) (his title is a play on the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions*). In this 'travelogue', the publisher's preface, the author's preface, and the introduction make up the entire text. After this lengthy, digressive preamble, the last lines of the account read: 'This being only a Digression from my Design, I am afraid I may trespass upon my Reader; but if it finds encouragement, I have Materials enough to advance it into a compleat Treatise'.[30] Both astute and overtly silly, King illustrates how long-winded, clumsy, and falsely self-deprecating travel prefaces tend to be (and he also targets Dampier and Sloane, who both offer copious prefatory materials and promise to release even more material at a later date). Within his facetiously bloated prefatory comments, King also lampoons conventional bids for veracity, commenting: 'The Author is modest; his Style humble; his Observations rais'd from the Appearances of Things, made as useful as they possibly cou'd be; for it is Truth that natural Philosophers must search after, and not Ornamental Expressions'.[31]

Along similar lines, Ward's *A Trip to Jamaica* (1698) targets the removed, detached perspective of the travel writer; his letter 'To the Reader' discusses the author's status as a whore, instead of a purveyor of truth, as 'both [author and whore] expose our *Reputations* to supply our *Necessities*'. Ward also comments on the purpose of travel-writing:

> I do not therein present you with a formal *Journal* of my Voyage, or *Geographical* Description of the *Island* of *Jamaica*, [as] that has been already done by Persons better Quallifi'd for such a Task. I only Entertain you with what I intend for your *Diversion*, not *Instruction*; Digested into such a Stile as might move your *Laughter*, not merit your *Esteem*.[32]

While Ward positions his text as an obvious farce, he also illustrates what the public expected from travel accounts at the turn of the century. Indeed, he ridicules precisely the tropes that were thought to guarantee truth: the strict journal, the plain 'stile', the character of the author, the precise descriptions. In

30 King, *Useful Transactions*, 58.
31 Ibid., sig. A3v.
32 Ward, *Trip to Jamaica*, sig. Ar-Av.

so doing, he exposes the meaninglessness and arbitrariness of these conventions as well as the possibilities of total misrepresentation when describing places inaccessible to the reading public.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the conventions that come to define the genre's prefatory material in the early century become so recognizable that travel liars hijack them to 'verify' false accounts. Probably the most famous travel hoax of the early eighteenth century, George Psalmanazar's *An Historical and Geographical Description of Formosa* (1704) manipulates travel-writing conventions (and specifically prefatory conventions) to forward an intricate lie about Formosa (now Taiwan), one that extended into his daily life: His identity, his memories, his language, his habits (from eating raw meat to sleeping while sitting upright) - all were meant to guarantee that he was a native of Formosa, and all were fabricated.[33] Early in his epistle dedicatory, Psalmanazar claims he publishes to dispel 'so many Stories, and such gross Fallacies' imposed on the public by the Jesuits, and his 'Preface' goes on to verify his account through an impressive array of rhetorical acrobatics.[34] He begins with a familiar trope: his friends and acquaintances 'thought it [his] Duty to publish', and he does so to oppose 'so many Romantic Stories of all those remote Eastern Countries, especially my own', which had been presented 'as undoubted Truths'. Psalmanazar believes that 'Truth ought to dispel these Clouds of fabulous Reports', and therefore offers 'a more faithful History'.[35] Modern readers are often delighted by the astonishing chutzpah of Psalmanazar's designs, though perhaps what is most impressive of all is the way he recognizes and subverts truth-telling conventions even as they are taking shape and does so in such a way as to make it nearly impossible for contemporary readers to disagree with him. Throughout his introductory comments, Psalmanazar shows an uncanny awareness of the type of rhetoric that establishes credibility and legitimizes character, while simultaneously demonstrating that none of these standards actually guarantees truth, but rather makes it more difficult to identify.

33 For more information on Psalmanazar's fascinating life and his stories about Formosa and Japan, see Keevak, *The Pretended Asian*. See also Lynch, 'Forgery as Performance Art', and Yang, 'Sincerity and Authenticity'. The hoax seems scarcely believable; at the time, however, there was so little European contact with the region that Psalmanazar's whiteness did not dissuade the public from crediting his account. Keevak explains: 'It hardly mattered whether one's dress, language, and actions were "authentic", since it was more important just to be different, alien, and unfamiliar. Yet at the same time this difference had to be assimilable, just as his whiteness was. Moreover, Psalmanazar had to be *consistently* different, alien, and unfamiliar'. See Keevak, 53. Father Jean de Fontaney (who had worked as a missionary in China for twelve years) disputed Psalmanazar's identity - even debating with him publically at a Royal Society meeting on August 11, 1703 - but Psalmanazar proved a formidable opponent.

34 Psalmanazar, *Formosa*, sig. A3r.

35 Ibid., i.

The fact that the vast majority of travel prefaces in the early eighteenth century - only a few of which I have discussed here, though there are countless other examples - so compulsively discuss truth and truth-telling illustrates that questions of truth define the travel genre at this particular juncture: What counts as truth, and how is it formatted? How can one guarantee veracity - and will it be accepted as such? What erodes truth, and what corroborates it? Some authors of the era seem willingly to walk the line between fact and fiction to test the limits of these categories and explore how they might overlap. Indeed, such pervasive questions about truth and representation do not simply lead to prolonged hoaxes - they also lead to new aesthetic categories. In his 1719 preface, Daniel Defoe famously promises that *Robinson Crusoe* is a 'just History of Fact', as he is cognizant that the discourse of facts invests his account with a weight and accountability more attractive to readers than mere fiction (he writes, we must remember, at a time when novels were not yet an acceptable or even a discrete generic category).[36] Defoe is not simply camouflaging his fiction: throughout his career, he invested in creating a new kind of realism that moves past the enumeration of facts to narrate the 'true' story of lived, felt experience (what we now often call 'formal realism').

Intriguingly, in executing this project, Defoe draws on the standards of empirical travel writing, but he also critiques them. For example, in the opening passages of Defoe's final voyage fiction, the facetiously titled *A New Voyage Round the World* (1724), Defoe's unnamed English narrator offers a pointed critique of the empirical style that had come to saturate the travel genre in the wake of Dampier's *New Voyage*.[37] In his opening sentence, he complains:

> It has for some Ages been thought so wonderful a thing to sail the Tour or Circle of the Globe, that when a Man has done this mighty Feat, he presently thinks it deserves to be recorded like Sir *Francis Drake*'s. [...] Tho' whatever Success they have had in the Voyage, they have had very little in the Relation; except to tell us, that a very good Sailor may make but a very indifferent Author.[38]

Few such travelogues 'have diverted us with that Variety which a Circle of that Length must needs offer'; told only 'superficially and by Halves', these 'tedious Accounts' are filled with details 'not at all to the Purpose when we

36 Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, sig. Av.

37 Though the title page of Defoe's *New Voyage* reads 1725, this first edition was actually published in November 1724. On this, see Rogers, *The Text of Great Britain*, 25.

38 Defoe, *New Voyage*, sig. Br.

come expecting to find the History of the Voyage'.[39] In this pointed attack on the scientific style, Defoe claims that the true story of the voyage cannot be related through observed particulars alone. His *New Voyage*, we are to understand, offers a truer rendition of human experience.

One might say that Defoe is simply justifying his own work, but he raises weightier concerns, too, and his discussion of his fiction is crucial to an early theory of the English novel. He theorizes this further in one of the most important prefaces of the early century: 'Robinson Crusoe's PREFACE', which appears in the third Crusoe installment, *Serious Reflections* (1720) (and thus the preface appears a year *after* the text to which it refers). Here Defoe (through Crusoe) outlines the underlying aesthetic, theoretical and moral foundations for *Robinson Crusoe*. Defending his previous account from accusations of falsehood, Crusoe states:

> I *Robinson Crusoe* [...] do affirm, that the Story, though Allegorical, is also Historical; and that it is the beautiful Representation of a Life of unexampled Misfortunes, and of a Variety not to be met with in the World, sincerely adapted to, and intended for the common Good of Mankind, and designed at first, as it is now farther apply'd, to the most serious Uses possible.[40]

This overlaying of what we now see as opposing categories is disorienting: Crusoe makes a bid for both history and allegory, both actual and symbolic. All caginess aside, what Defoe struggles to outline here is a new way of tending to the claims of reality that is neither purely empirical nor religious, but also not untrue. In other words, Defoe articulates a nascent aesthetic theory that justifies fiction as a competing form of truth.[41] Importantly for the purpose of this essay, Crusoe's prologue opens space for Defoe to theorize the genre that he helps to develop. Here again, then, paratextual material (however removed from the original text) proves vital for not just introducing but positioning and theorizing a literary production.

Conclusion

Travel prefaces and their concomitant truth claims do not simply disappear

39 Ibid, 2-3.

40 Defoe, *Serious Reflections*, sig. A3r.

41 There are several important studies of Crusoe's preface and *Serious Reflections* more generally. On the epistemological conditions that gave rise to Defoe's confusing terminology, see especially Mayer, *History and the Early English Novel*, 8, and Austin, '"Jesting with the Truth"'. In another incisive study, Folkenflik notes that 'the yoking together of allegory and history in *Crusoe's* PREFACE' arises when 'Defoe is trying to emphasise the gravity and complexity of the literary traditions in which his work is grounded' (9). See '*Robinson Crusoe* and the Semiotic Crisis'.

in the later eighteenth century, but they do seem to become less prolix and less urgent with the waning of natural history and the emergence of more discrete categories of writing (botany, zoology, the picturesque, the novel). In an interesting counter-current to the lengthy professions of truth of the early century, several authors of the 1730s and '40s - such as the little-known but fascinating Scotsman Alexander Hamilton - take on garrulous, confident narrative personas and cut short their introductions with claims of straightforward practicality. For example, in the epistle dedicatory to his *A New Account of the East Indies* (1727), Hamilton denounces 'the elaborate Work of several ingenious Pens', emphasizing instead his extensive first-hand knowledge of the region.[42] He promises that he will relate what is notable and valuable - and that's that. He states succinctly: 'I will not apologize (as many do) for my Weakness or Unfitness for this Undertaking, for I assure [you], if I had not thought my self pretty well qualified for it, I had never set about it'.[43] Such a clipped, confident prologue can be seen as a response to the nervous, wordy, often baffling introductions of the earlier century.

In 1755, the narrator of the anonymously published and wildly fantastical *Voyage to the World in the Centre of the Earth* similarly reacts against wordy travel prologues that fail to guarantee truth. Here the author skips the preface and introduction altogether and explains in the first lines of the text:

> It is not my Intention, as is common amongst Writers of Travels, to entertain my Readers with an Account of my Birth, Parentage and Education, I have too often myself, in reading the Works of others, been surfeited with such Impertinencies. For what is it to the Reader, whether the Author was born in the North or South of *England*, whether his Father was a fat Man or a lean one, a Cobler or a Person of an independent Fortune? Or whether the Author himself was born on a *Sunday* or a *Monday*? when at the same Time, it does not much signify whether he had ever been born at all.[44]

Further, the narrator promises to 'stick closely to Truth', and 'state Facts just as they are, and for the Truth of which the Reader need only take my Word'.[45] While Hamilton narrates a true account and this narrator an overtly fictitious one, both reject established conventions and provide either a brusque, assertive prologue or none at all. But these writers share the same aim as earlier travelers:

42 Hamilton, *A New Account*, Vol. I, v.
43 Ibid., Vol. I, vii.
44 Anon., *Voyage to the World*, 1-2.
45 Ibid., 16-17.

to accentuate the simple truth of their narrations.

All of the conventions I have discussed above - e.g., the simple observer untrained in the arts of rhetoric, the plain style, the family pedigree, the first-hand witnessing, the insistence on self-evident facts and simple truths, the diary and the documentation - have consolidated by early eighteenth century, when they saturate the genre and, in turn, are lampooned, parodied and exploited. Much later in the century, travelers like James Cook are less apologetic and less insistent in their truth-claims (and authors like Laurence Sterne celebrate the subjectivity of theirs), indicating that some of the more pressing questions about the production and dissemination of truth in travel writing have subsided. Perhaps, too, readers are more confident in deciphering truth while also expecting less from travel accounts: if travel writers cannot promise absolute truth, there are lower stakes and fewer worries. In this way, the process of disciplinization - which entails the acknowledgement of different types of inquiry that produce different types of truth - seems to have eased the intense pressure on travel writers, as authors and readers alike begin to recognize both the genre's potential and its limitations. How and when exactly these issues subside are questions that need further research, but the British travelogues outlined above suggest that questions of truth in travel writing erupt most prominently - most directly and comprehensively - in the early eighteenth century amidst the sweeping epistemological changes of that era. In British travel writing from 1660 to 1730, prefaces and introductions make up a distinct and important sub-genre, one that dramatizes a crucial moment in the construction of modern notions of truth.

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The pleasure of being deceived: spectatorship in the arts and other deceptions in eighteenth-century England

Jacqueline Hylkema

Eighteenth-century Britain was rife with deception and its fascination with the subject was reflected in an abundance of pamphlets and prints discussing exposed cases of forgery and imposture. A small number of these discussions continued a Baroque tradition in which the illusionary nature of the arts was explored in sustained comparisons with actual deception. This article presents several of these visual and textual commentaries, including William Hogarth's *The Wise Men of Godliman* (1726) and prints and pamphlets related to the Great Bottle Hoax (1749), and shows how these reflected eighteenth-century developments in the perception of the arts and their dynamics, especially in terms of spectatorship, while remaining thoroughly in line with the Enlightenment's ideas on truth and lying.

In the first week of January 1749, an intriguing advertisement appeared in a number of London newspapers. Next Monday, the advertisement announced, a man would appear on the stage of the New Theatre in Haymarket and perform a number of 'most surprising things', including jumping into a small tavern bottle.[1] Of course this would be physically impossible but the New Theatre did have a reputation to uphold when it came to sensational productions. In 1737, *The Historical Register for the Year 1736*, a play written by Henry Fielding, the then-manager of the theatre, had been the main cause for the introduction of the Licensing Act and over the next decade, Fielding's successor, Samuel Foote, had become famous for the quirky productions he devised in order to dodge this law. However, none of these had been quite as eccentric as the one promised by the advertisement. It soon became the talk of the town and on the evening of 16 January, the New Theatre was packed. However, when neither man nor bottle appeared, the audience's eager anticipation quickly turned into suspicion, disappointment and frustration. When it finally realized that the whole affair had been a hoax, the audience flew into a collective rage, wrecked the theatre and built a bonfire with its remains in the street.

Over the following weeks, the events at Haymarket were eagerly discussed, in word as well as image, in newspapers, pamphlets and prints, demonstrating

1 Kirby, *Kirby's Wonderful and Eccentric Museum*, 11.

Fig. 1. ‘Mercury’, engraving by Jan Saenredam after Hendrick Goltzius (1596). © British Museum, London.

a particular characteristic of eighteenth-century deception. As Jack Lynch writes: ‘What is unusual about the eighteenth century is the copious and detailed debates over these deceptions, with their growing sophistication and scepticism’.[2] This abundance of public discussion is not entirely surprising as deception was rife in eighteenth-century England and was closely related to many of the key concepts of the Enlightenment, such as judgement, rationality and, indeed, scepticism. In the case of the Great Bottle Hoax, as the Haymarket prank would become known, the discussion focused on the identity of the culprits but a significant number of these went beyond the simple game of ‘seek the bottleman’ and included reflections on the dynamics of deception. Why had the audience expected to see a man jump into a small bottle when it must have known this to be impossible? And why had the discovery that they had been fooled caused so much outrage?

The public debates on specific deception cases like the great Bottle Hoax are a crucial source for any study on the perception and role of deception in eighteenth-century English society but they also include a smaller and very specific thread that appears to elaborate on a European-wide discussion found in seventeenth-century works of art, paintings and plays in particular. Hendrick Goltzius' drawing of Mercury, from his 1596 *The Children of the Planets* series, provides a particularly good introduction to this discussion. The drawing, which was turned into a highly popular print by Jan Saenredam (figure 1), depicts Mercury along with the professions associated with him. By placing two rhetoricians, identified by their gestures, books and clothing, in the foreground, Goltzius emphasizes that he presents Mercury in his role as the protector of rhetoric, the art of persuasion. Behind the statue we see Mercury's other children: the painter, the sculptor, the actors on stage and - right in the centre - the quack, the profession associated with so many different forms of deception, from textual forgery to imposture, that it had become a by-word for deception in late sixteenth-century Europe.

What unites all of these professions is that they all weave a fabric of lies, a notion that Goltzius emphasizes by prominently placing a weaving shuttle between the quack and the painter. The shuttle refers to the early modern Dutch word ‘ webbe’, which referred to a woven tissue but was also used in the meaning of a literary text and in the phrase ‘een webbe van leughens’, which literally translates as ‘a tissue of lies’. More importantly perhaps, all the professions presented by Goltzius use rhetoric, as the motto in Saenredam's print states, to

2 Lynch, *Deception and Detection*, viii.

persuade their respective audiences of their ‘artes’ - which in Latin refers to arts as well as tricks. It is significant to note that Goltzius' drawing explicitly depicts this process of persuasion: all the deceivers are shown in action, with their audiences. But what do the artists need to persuade their audiences of? The answer is, indeed, a deception, the kind of deception that occurs when the work transcends its representational frame and is experienced as that which it represents. It is, for instance, the moment when we forget that the figure in front of us has been sculpted out of marble and respond to it as if it were a real person. We may kneel down to worship it or reach out our hand to stroke skin - only to touch cold marble and discover that we have been deceived.[3]

This effect was to become one of the key concepts of Baroque art and was epitomized by its popular genre of the *trompe l'oeil*. The comparison between actual deception, such as that committed by quacks, and the arts provided painters and playwrights with the opportunity to present sustained explorations of the dynamics of the deception of the eye in their particular medium. Deception became a popular subject for canvases and stages all over Europe, from the works of Dutch painters like Frans van Mieris and Gerrit Dou to the comedies of Ben Jonson, Gian Lorenzo Bernini and Thomas Asselyn, and served as vehicles for reflections on the relationship and processes between artist, work and audience.[4] It is important to note that unlike the many seventeenth-century neo-Platonic and Calvinist discussions about the deceptive nature of the imitative arts, these reflections did not dismiss the illusionary nature of art nor condemn it for any negative effects its deceptions might have on the spectator. On the contrary, this particular debate celebrated the artist's ability to create illusions, discussing it in terms of craftsmanship and authority, and emphasized that its effect on the viewer was mainly that of pleasure. In fact, the association between the experience of deception and pleasure was so strong that at the end of the seventeenth century, John Locke remarked, with a slight weariness: ‘'tis in vain to find fault with those Arts of Deceiving, wherein Men find pleasure to be deceiv'd’.[5]

In the long eighteenth century, the comparison between the dynamics of the arts and deception found a second medium in the many discussions about newly exposed cases of forgery, imposture and other types of actual deception. This article focuses on two of these cases and discusses how the comparison was

3 For a discussion of this effect in Baroque art and how it relates to the effect theorized by anthropologist Alfred Gell as ‘presence’, please see Van Eck and Bussels (2011).

4 Ben Jonson's *Volpone* (1606), Gian Lorenzo Bernini's *The Impresario* (1643) and Thomas Asselyn's, *De Kwakzalver* (1692).

5 Locke, *Essay*, 235.

elaborated on in a number of specific images and texts. The first of these cases is the Great Bottle Hoax, which will be discussed in terms of the relationship between deception and the theatre, with particular reference to the notions of audience, experience and pleasure. How does the representation of deception in this particular debate reflect contemporary theories about the nature of the theatre and the role of the audience? And how does it relate to the eighteenth century's preoccupation with the concept of truth?

The second case concerns that of Mary Toft, 'the pretended Rabbet-Breeder of Godalming in Surrey'.[6] In the autumn of 1726 Toft created an overnight sensation by claiming to have given birth to 15 rabbits, and an even greater one, several weeks later, when the whole affair was exposed as a hoax. This exposure immediately generated an abundance of visual and textual commentaries, including William Hogarth's print *Cunicularii or The Wise Men of Godliman in Consultation* (1726). Like the other commentators, Hogarth satirizes those who had fallen for Toft's deception but on a deeper level the image also reflects on the dynamics of spectatorship in the visual arts and engages with earlier visual discussions of this subject, particularly those found in the Dutch genre of the quack painting. This particular genre, made popular by seventeenth-century painters like Jan Steen and Jan Mientse Molenaer, depicts quacks, usually standing on a small, raised stage, as they attempt to sell their worthless medicines to a mesmerized audience. These paintings focus on the concept of gullibility - a theme reflecting the importance and fear of deception in early modern Europe - and aimed to give the spectator pleasure by evoking the sense of superior judgment and feelings of *Schadenfreude*. The spectator would have known to interpret the figure of the quack as a deceiver and would have revelled in the sense of superiority afforded by the idea that he or she would have known better than the audience in the image.

Gerrit Dou's painting *The Quack* (figure 2), from 1652, includes all of the genre's traditional elements. The quack takes centre-stage, literally, and is shown presenting his captive audience with a bottle of medicine. He is accompanied by all the props traditionally associated with quacks: an exotic parasol, an even more exotic monkey and a medical diploma so grand it has to be a forgery. What makes the painting different from all previous examples of the genre however is Dou's own presence in the painting. He is show hanging out of the window directly behind the quack, holding a palette. The composition and the similarity in how the figures of Dou and the quack are both presenting

6 Manningham, *An Exact Diary*, title page.

the attributes of their profession immediately establish an implicit comparison between the two. Unlike the audience in the image, Dou is not watching the quack but directly confronts the viewer's gaze. This creates a relationship between spectator and painter that explicitly resembles that between the quack and his audience. I, Dou appears to tell his viewer, am doing exactly to you what he is doing to them: I am deceiving you. However, the quack's audience falls for his lies as a result of their gullibility, Dou's spectator is fooled by the exquisitely realistic nature of his painting. The gleaming seal on the quack's forged diploma looks deceptively real and the velvety fabric of the tablecloth is conveyed so realistically that the viewer wants to reach out and touch it. Through his ability to deceive his viewer's eye, Dou manages to cross, for a brief moment, the representational boundaries of his medium and this, in turn, instils the viewer with admiration and pleasure.[7]

Fig. 2. ‘The Quack’, painting (oil on panel) by Gerard Dou (1652). © Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

Fig. 3. ‘Cunicularii or The Wise men of Godliman in Consultation’, etching by William Hogarth (1726). © British Museum, London.

7 For a more extensive discussion of Gerrit Dou's *The Quack*, please see Gaskell (1982).

The composition of William Hogarth's *Cunicularii or The Wise Men of Godliman in Consultation* (figure 3) is reminiscent of the conventions

of seventeenth-century quack paintings. The deceiver Mary Toft is shown presenting her deception to a captive audience but the tables are turned, for this captive audience consists of the legitimate physicians who fell for her hoax. In November 1726, the first of these victims, a man-midwife called John Howard, had started writing to some of the most famous physicians of the day, claiming that a patient of his, a poor girl from the small village of Godliman in Surrey, had given birth to bits of cat (three legs to be precise) and twelve rabbits. Although sceptical, several of these doctors rushed to Toft's bedside. including Nathanael St. André, surgeon to the Royal Household of George I. After witnessing another rabbit birth, St. André examined Toft before and after the birth and carried out several tests on the animal tissue that had emerged from Toft's womb. These tests should have told St. André that the births had been faked but he was so fascinated by them that he dismissed the scientific evidence and pronounced the births to be authentic.

King George I found himself fascinated too by St. André's reports, especially as they appealed to his well-known interest in extraordinary natural

phenomena. However, he was a cautious man and sent the renowned German surgeon Cyriacus Ahlers to Surrey to investigate the case further. Ahlers examined Toft as well as the preserved rabbit bits she had supposedly given birth to and observed that the bodies contained droppings with pieces of straw and grain. This meant that the rabbit must have lived and eaten before emerging from Toft's womb, which led Ahlers to conclude that the births could not be anything but a hoax. Even in the face of Ahlers' evidence, Howard and St. André kept insisting the births were real but the king ordered Toft to be brought to London, where she could be kept under close observation. Within days, she became the toast of London, with every medical man worth his salt attending her chambers to discuss the case and witness the birth of the sixteenth rabbits. However, it was not to be. On 7 December, Sir Richard Manningham, England's most famous man-midwife, decided to deceive the woman whom he believed to be a deceiver by pretending that he was going to carry out a painful examination to find out the truth. Toft believed him and in order to avoid being examined, she confessed. Having heard of the king's fascination with strange natural phenomena, she had decided to create one herself in the hope that the king might grant her a pension. After buying or catching the animals, she had cut them up, inserted them into her body and then pretended - with the necessary acting - to give birth to them.[8]

Hogarth's representation of the Mary Toft affair in *Cunicularii or The Wise Men of Godliman in Consultation* presents Toft mid-birth and flanked by Manningham, identified by the dramatis personae underneath the image. Manningham's arm is up Toft's skirt as he tries to deliver yet another monstrous child to add to the group of rabbits in the front of the bed. She and Manningham are surrounded by her accomplices and other physicians, all of whom seem to accept the veracity of the birth without question. St. André cries out: ‘A great birth!’ According to Jenny Uglow, Hogarth's print was published on 12 December 1726, only five days after Mary's confession. As no detailed accounts of the affair had been published yet at that stage, Hogarth created his image without knowing all the facts relating to the case. The image presents Howard as her accomplice, which he was not, and Ahlers and Manningham are depicted as having been as credulous as St. André - which they most certainly were not.[9] Despite getting these details wrong, Hogarth's satirical representation of the case is very similar to the other images produced in the

8 For extensive accounts of the Mary Toft affair, please see Ahlers (1727), Manningham (1727) and St André (1726).

9 Uglow, *Hogarth*, 119.

immediate aftermath of the exposure, in the sense that it ridicules the physicians for choosing to believe their eyes rather than trusting scientific evidence. The effect is exactly that of Dutch quack paintings: the image allowed Hogarth's spectator to look at the physicians in the image and derive pleasure from knowing what they did not know and seeing what they refused to see.

At first sight, Hogarth's print is a fairly straightforward satirical study in *Schadenfreude* but the image is extremely complex and has several layers of meaning. Mary Toft's first name and the fact that her hoax involved births allowed Hogarth to create an explicit comparison between deception and the narratives of Christianity. The title of the work and its composition of course refer to the adoration of the Magi and turn the image into a perverted nativity scene, with Mary Toft in the role of the Virgin Mary and Manningham, Ahlers and St. André as the three wise men. This, Uglow notes, 'is the work of a realist who scorns fantasy, medical or religious'.[10] However, Hogarth's image has more to offer than enlightened blasphemy for he also compares Toft's deception to the illusionary nature of the arts.

The most obvious of these arts is the theatre, which is evoked by the curtains behind Toft and the dramatis personae underneath the image. We are looking at a stage, her stage, and see her mid-performance. The curtains also evoke Hogarth's own medium in a reference to the contest between the Greek painters, Zeuxis and Parrhasius, in which the latter deceived his rival by painting curtains that were so lifelike, that Zeuxis tried to open them and as a result, lost the contest. In his *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst* (1678) the Dutch painter and art theorist Samuel van Hoogstraten concludes his praise of the achievement of Parrhasius with the remark that the perfect painting is 'like a mirror of nature, that makes things that are not there appear as if they are, and as such is deceptive in a permissible, entertaining and praiseworthy manner'.[11] The Zeuxis story was a popular motif in early modern art and many seventeenth-century artists, most notably Gerrit Dou, had included curtains in their images to highlight the seductive deceptiveness of the realism of their paintings.[12]

However, Toft's hoax differs from the illusions created by the arts in the sense that in art, the illusion is offered in the explicit context of its medium and the deception occurs when the representation transcends this frame and

10 Ibidem, 120.

11 Hoogstraten, *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole*. My translation from Dutch: 'Want een volmaekte Schildery is als een spiegel van de Natuer, die de dingen, die niet er zijn, doet schijnen te zijn, en op een geoorlofde vermakelijke en prijslijke wijze bedriegt'.

12 See Hénin, 'Pharrhasius and the Stage Curtain', 49-61.

is experienced as that which it represents. In 1735 for example, *The Prompter* magazine would describe this effect beautifully in an introduction to a dialogue on the pleasures of painting by the French painter and playwright Charles-Antoine Coypel:

> There's a sort of Magick in the Art, which (distinct from the Satisfaction we receive in contemplating the Beauties of a fine Picture) charms by the Deception it puts upon us. [...] To see an irritated Sea, and a Vessel struggling with the over-pouring Wave, or splitting on a Rock, while Horror and Despair strike from the ghastly Looks of the drowning Mariners: - It is no longer a dumb Entertainment to the Eye, but a Speaking Image to the Mind, that awakens ev'ry Sentiment and Power in it, and hurries the Beholder, by an imperceptible Violence, thro' every Passion represented in the now living Canvas.[13]

In deception however there is no representational frame to transcend: whether it concerns a persona, object or event, the deception is immediately presented as that which it purports to be. In other words, it has to be presented as original, authentic and real, and a good deceiver will make sure that it will never cross his victims' minds that it could be anything else. Only after the exposure, the deception can be seen for what it really is and can be compared to art. This is a crucial point in Hogarth's references to the arts in *Cunicularii or The Wise Men of Godliman in Consultation*: the physicians are completely unaware that the birth they see unfold before them is a deception. To them it was real but those viewing the image would have known better. These viewers knew that the image depicted a hoax and would have seen Hogarth's references to painting and the stage as a reinforcement of the idea that the birth was mere fiction, ‘a now living Canvas’, put in front of those who believed it to be real.

It is difficult to tell whether William Hogarth approved of artistic deception in the same way Gerrit Dou and his fellow Baroque artists did. After all, Hogarth was an Enlightenment man, who believed in truth and detested hypocrisy and other kinds of dishonesty. However, the references to the theatre in *Cunicularii or The Wise Men of Godliman in Consultation* do include a complex process of identification between artist and deceiver. Hogarth presents Mary Toft to his viewer as an actress, a Parrhasius and the living image that she herself has created and embodies. However, this is his image of her, his recreation of her creation, which creates a similar identification between artist and deceiver as the one found in Dou's painting. It is also important to note that Hogarth's

13 Anon., *The Prompter*, 1.

recreation of Toft is mendacious. By all accounts, Mary Toft was a plain girl but Hogarth presents her as quite beautiful and, as Jenny Uglow observes, 'the gullible, self-important men in this print look far more absurd than the strong, supine woman. For once the "lower" groups - the women and the poor - have hoodwinked the rich and the experts'.[14]

This victory would most certainly have appealed to Hogarth's sense of social justice, even if it was achieved through deception, and it is exactly this idea that made the illusionary nature of art acceptable to Hogarth. Matthew Craske notes that Hogarth, like other eighteenth-century artists with what he calls 'a strong civic humanist agenda', subscribed to

> a civic humanist theory of illusion - the belief that it was permissible to deceive the senses of their viewers for the sake of a higher moral mission. [...] [The art of Hogarth and Goya] explores a rich vein of irony inherent in the work of the visual artist concerned with moral reform; an individual; who was obliged to harness an essentially deceitful medium of imitation to the task of clarifying his public's moral vision.[15]

This approach to artistic illusion sets Hogarth firmly apart from seventeenth-century artists like Gerrit Dou whose illusions had fully adhered to Baroque ideals and whose artistic identification with his quack had served to explore and emphasize his own artistic authority and mastery. Whereas the illusions created by Dou's masterly painting skills evoked admiration and pleasure in his spectators, Hogarth's pictorial lies, including his embellishment of Toft's beauty, ultimately serve social justice and the happiness of mankind rather than the pleasure of his spectator.

Hogarth's representation of the Mary Toft affair also differs from seventeenth-century representations in its emphasis on the deceived rather than the deceiver. Gerrit Dou's image is about the quack and asks how can the deceiver deceive? Hogarth's image however asks: how are the deceived deceived? Ultimately the image is not about Mary Toft: as the title indicates, it focuses on the wise men in consultation, Toft's audience, and reflects on the way they observe and perceive her. In this sense, the print is a prelude to Hogarth's *The Laughing Audience*, which was published in 1733 as a subscription ticket for Hogarth's *The Rake's Progress* series. The image depicts a theatre audience and shows their response to the unseen performance. The audience in the pit is

14 Uglow, *Hogarth*, 120.
15 Craske, *Art in Europe*, 146-147.

attentive and amused by the performance, with one member wiping away tears of laughter, whereas the gentlemen up in the box pay no attention whatsoever to the stage and instead chat up the Orange Girls. The image not only reflects Hogarth's interest in response but also the eighteenth century's general shift in interest from creation to response.[16] Another example of this shift is found in *The Prompter*'s introduction, in which the author exclusively focuses on the spectator's experience of the illusion and explores 'how it charms by the *Deception* it puts upon us'.[17] Hogarth's image is one of the very first representations of this shift to the audience and may, as Jim Davis suggests, 'have set the tone for visual depictions of eighteenth-century spectators'.[18]

Although it took place nearly 25 years after the Mary Toft affair, the Great Bottle Hoax is very much related to the same shift to the audience. In the days that followed the riot at the New Theatre, many of the London newspapers published accounts of the event and a range of pamphlets and cartoons were produced to satirize the events. Initially these publications focused on the possible identity of the culprit. Samuel Foote, the New Theatre's manager, was the obvious suspect: not only was he infamous for his quirky productions but he was also a savvy businessman and many thought that placing a fake advertisement to pack a house would not be beyond him. However, the day after the riot, Foote and John Potter, the owner of the New Theatre, both took out advertisements in several London newspapers to deny any responsibility in the matter.[19] Others published satirical anonymous pamphlets, including *An Apology to the Town, for Himself and the Bottle* (1749) and *A Modest Apology for the Man in the Bottle. By Himself* (1749), to present themselves as the culprit. The author of the second pamphlet also explained that he would indeed have jumped into 'a very, very large *Bottle*' if only the audience hadn't frightened him so.[20]

16 For more extensive discussions of the eighteenth-century emphasis on spectatorship in respectively painting and the theatre, please see Matthew Craske (1997) and Jim Davis (2007).
17 Anon., *The Prompter*, 1.
18 Davis, 'Spectatorship', 62.
19 Kirby, *Kirby's Wonderful and Eccentric Museum*, 14-16.
20 Anon., *A Modest Apology*, 22.

Fig. 4. ‘The Magician, or Bottle Cungerer/English Credulity; or Ye're all Bottled’, etching by Bispham Dickinson (1749). ©British Museum, London.

However, the most interesting part of the Great Bottle Hoax is not so much who committed it, but how it was responded to and how these responses were represented. In the satirical prints and the pamphlets that were produced in the weeks and even months after the event, the main emphasis was placed on the notion of gullibility, condemning the audience for having believed the advertisement, and the way they behaved when they found out that they had

been fooled. Bispham Dickinson's highly popular print *English Credulity; or, Ye're all Bottled* (figure 4) shows Britannia exclaiming ‘O! My Sons!’ while the gullible Bottle Hoax audience is seduced by Satan. The opening lines of the accompanying verse read: ‘With Grief, Resentment and averted Eyes, Britannia droops to see her Sons (once Wise so fam'd for Arms, for Conduct so renown'd with every Virtue, every Glory crown'd) now sink ignoble, and to nothing fall; obedient marching forth at Folly's Call’.

However, the pamphlet *A Letter to the Town concerning the Man and the Bottle*, which was published anonymously a few weeks after the event, argues that gullibility had nothing to do with the events at the New Theatre and points out that the audience knew very well that the bottle trick promised by the advertisement was in fact impossible:

> Notwithstanding all that can be said, I will never be persuaded but this gentleman was really a Conjuror; For sure nothing less than a supernatural power could draw so many wise, witty and polite Beings together! - Among which were Philosophers, Mathematicians, Astrologers and Authors, both tragic and comic; every one of which declared it was an imposition, and a thing not possible to be done, and yet all went with eager expectation to see it! - I hope, Gentlemen, you won't deny but your practice was different from your Opinions.[21]

The author then states that the theatre is where the audience goes to witness an illusion. So what, he asks, caused the fury of the audience at the New Theatre when they realized that the bottle trick was exactly this, an illusion? He warns the town's playwrights and actors to be cautious in future, for staging illusions has become a dangerous business in London now:

> How will the combin'd Atoms of the Town deal round their Vengeance, when scenes incorrect, Characters uncouth, and Plots unnatural appear before 'em? Will they not then unbung the Hogshead of Displeasure, uncork the Bottles of their Rage, and fling 'm, direful, at the Actors Heads?[22]

The point seems sensible but is not entirely valid as it ignores a fundamental difference between artistic and actual deceptions. As argued earlier, the line between these two is located in the acknowledgement of the representational frame. Works of art are presented as works of art and if they succeed in creating an illusion that the spectator believes to be real, this effect will only be temporary and the spectator will always remain aware at some level that the illusion is not real. A painting may appear to its spectator as, to use *The Prompter*'s phrase, a '*now living* Canvas' but it remains a canvas nevertheless. Actual deceptions may be similar to illusionary works of art in the sense that they have been created for an audience but in order to succeed and be accepted into the fabric of reality, they must hide that they are not real and be offered as part of reality. This did make the Great Bottle Hoax different from a work of art because the advertisement was published in a newspaper and not presented within an artistic and obviously fictional context.

The author of *A Letter to the Town* concludes his discussion by scolding the audience for its behaviour at the New Theatre and for wrecking the theatre: 'The Poor house had not been guilty of Any Error, but kindly stood with Open Arms to receive you in her Bosom; little thinking you wou'd tear her guts out,

21 Anon., *A Letter to the Town*, 9.
22 Ibidem, 10.

and reward her hospitality with ruin'.[23] He advises the town to let the matter rest now: 'for if you Prostitute your Applause and Censure at so mad a rate, both will be despised; nor will an Author think his fame secure, though built upon the firmest ground your Approbation can bestow'.[24]

The points raised in *A Letter to the Town* about the illusionary nature of the theatre and the audience's response reflect key developments in the eighteenth-century perception of the theatre. The connection between these two points is made clear in *A Guide to the Stage, or Select Instructions and Precedents from the best Authorities towards Forming A Polite Audience* (1751). In his introduction the anonymous author of the pamphlet writes, with a certain degree of pride, that his is the first book to lay down rules about audience behaviour for those who frequent the playhouse. There is, he writes, much need for such instruction:

> We daily see and hear injudicious applause, laborious attention, rustic laughter, and inelegant tears, with other errors no less gross than obvious. There are even some who wilfully forget themselves, see and hear Romeo and Juliet in person, are at Denmark or Mantua, without once dreaming of Drury-Lane or Garrick.[25]

This effect of seeing and hearing Romeo and Juliet in person is the illusion that occurs when the work transcends its own representational boundaries and the spectator experiences the work as real rather than a representation. It is also mentioned in *The Prompter*'s 1735 introduction to Charles-Antoine Coypel's dialogue:

> To have some celebrated Action, express'd with so much Force, that we see Dignity, or Grief, Terror, or Love, according to the Circumstances of the Story, and are moved as strongly, as if the Persons represented were actually in Being, and before our Eyes: - To see a stabb'd Lucretia, or a dying Cleopatra, and exposed Andromeda, or a forsaken Ariadne'.[26]

To this author, seeing Lucretia, Cleopatra, Andromeda and Ariadne in person is a desirable experience and part of the magic of art that 'charms by the *Deception* it puts upon us'. However, for the author of *A Guide to the Stage*, art holds no such charm. To him, believing the illusion presented by the theatre reflects

23 Ibidem, 15.
24 Ibidem, 22.
25 Anon., *A Guide to the Stage*, B.
26 Anon., *The Prompter*, 1.

unsophisticated viewing processes and the author argues that it is responsible for the impolite behaviour displayed in London's theatres. The remedy to this behaviour is for the spectator to cling to the stage's representational frame and remain aware that this *is* Drury Lane or Garrick. The best way to achieve this, the author suggests, is to adopt a rational and objective attitude towards the theatre and to gain knowledge about actors and specific plays, especially by trying to attend good productions several times. This will enable the spectator to assess how well the actors convey the text and prepare him or her for the feelings certain events and speeches are expected to evoke.[27]

As for the expression of audience response in the theatre, the author admits that the most elegant behaviour takes time and practice to learn and that the best way to go about it, is to copy that of those who conduct themselves best. The very best conduct, the author asserts, shows composure of mind, which involves laughing only at appropriate moments and no weeping. A simple nod, a short clap or a simple statement of 'That is very moving' will do.[28] The important thing is not to get carried away and fall for the deceptions of the stage, even for a single moment: the sophisticated spectator never forgets the representational nature of the scene in front of him or her. This distinction between the highbrow and the lowbrow spectator was common in eighteenth-century discussions and representations of the theatre. Matthew Craske notes that Hogarth's *The Laughing Audience* makes this distinction too: 'The general mass of Hogarth's audience appear to be of the "middling sort" who laugh in an unattractively raucous manner, showing themselves to be over-involved in the fiction which they witness'.[29] The difference between the highbrow and lowbrow lies in their conduct, but more importantly, in their approach to the deceptive qualities of the theatre - the unsophisticated spectator falls for the lie, the sophisticated spectator does not but appreciates it and bases his judgment on how well the illusion is staged.

Most representations created during the aftermath of the Great Bottle Hoax were intended to provide *Schadenfreude* but there was one notable exception. This is George Bickham the Younger's *The Bottle Conjurer, from Head to Foot, without Equivocation* (figure 5), which was published on 24 January 1749. The image shows the audience building a bonfire in the street with the remains of the theatre they have just destroyed. The title of the print promises to show the scene as it happened and despite a number of obviously comical elements,

27 Anon., *A Guide to the Stage*, 12-14.
28 Ibidem, 16.
29 Craske, *Art in Europe*, 182.

such as the gentleman who has literally lost his head, the image is marked by savagery and references to the serious consequences of the audience's fury. Several people are being trampled by the mob, a man is about to throw a cat on the fire and the banner on top of the fire spells out the extent of John Potter's financial ruin. The image is unequivocal in its condemnation of both the hoax and the audience's response and underlines this in the poem underneath. This starts by accusing the culprit, whoever he was, of having tried to earn gold with little trouble 'by putting giddy Lyes in publick Papers' and concludes by pronouncing 'The Audience Fools, the Conjurer a Thief'.

Fig. 5. 'The Bottle Conjurer, from Head to Foot, without Equivocation', etching/engraving by George Bickham the Younger (1749). © British Museum, London.

The Bottle Conjurer, from Head to Foot is also, to my best knowledge, the only commentary to make a serious attempt to identify this thief, and it is likely that its identification is correct. As the mob riots on, it is observed by three gentlemen who are hanging out of the window of the public house on the right-hand side of the image. Underneath the pub window two words have been scribbled, the first of which is 'Chesterfield' and might be a reference to Philip Stanhope, the Earl of Chesterfield, who has long been the main suspect in the case of the Great Bottle Hoax. According to a persistent story that has never been proven conclusively, Stanhope had made a bet with the Duke of Portland that he could 'find fools enough in London to fill a playhouse and pay handsomely for the privilege of being there'.[30] The gentleman on the left indeed

30 Walsh, *Handy-Book*, 476.

bears a strong physical resemblance to Stanhope and the way he proudly points at the fire does suggest that the artist believed that Stanhope was responsible for the hoax and its disastrous consequences.

While it is highly unlikely that the similarity between the depiction of Stanhope and Gerrit Dou's self-portrait in *The Quack* is deliberate, its effect is striking. Both men take pride in the illusion they have created but Dou's achievement is artistic and fully adheres to the Baroque objective of giving pleasure to its spectators. By the 1720s, this perception of artistic illusion had become out-dated. In his representation of the Mary Toft affair, Hogarth refers to the Baroque tradition but ultimately rejects it in favour of artistic illusion that does not bring pleasure but adheres to the social and moral ideals of the Enlightenment. As for the actual deception depicted by Hogarth, his sympathy lies with Mary Toft. Hogarth might have disapproved of deception but does acknowledge that the creative dynamics of imposture resemble that of art and more importantly, that despite crossing a line by hiding its fictional status, Mary's imposture revealed and, initially, triumphed over poverty and inequality. George Bickham the Younger has no such understanding for Stanhope, whose motives were frivolous and selfish and caused nothing but misery.

The Great Bottle Hoax had a remarkably long aftermath, in the sense that references to the case would be used well into the 1820s to denote gullibility and stupidity in visual satire. It then, like most exposed hoaxes, quietly slipped away into obscurity and would only sometimes be quoted as a literary curiosity. The case of Mary Toft has fared rather better in this respect. Hogarth would portray her once more, in *Credulity, Superstition and Fanaticism* (1762). This print, which attacks secular and religious credulity, and *Cunicularii or The Wise Men of Godliman in Consultation* have both become popular subjects in academic discussions of the English Enlightenment, especially in the context of the roles of rationality, judgement and scepticism in eighteenth-century science and religion. However, as this article has attempted to show, *Cunicularii or The Wise Men of Godliman in Consultation* and the visual and textual commentaries on the Great Bottle Hoax also elaborate on the Baroque discourse of the illusionary nature of the arts and continue its tradition of exploring the dynamics of art through the dynamics between deceiver and deceived in actual deception. Unlike their seventeenth-century predecessors, many of these commentators did find fault with the arts of deceiving but they found new ways to use and appreciate them that not only gave pleasure but were also thoroughly in line with the ideals and values of the Enlightenment.

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Als niet komt tot iet, is het allemans verdriet.[1] De verzekeraar Johannes van der Hey

Ton Jongenelen

In the 1760s, the former hack writer Johannes van der Hey founded a life insurance company that made many promises but in the end could not deliver. When the deception came to light in 1777, he fled Amsterdam with a considerable amount of the policyholders' money. Van der Hey was not only criticized for his mismanagement but also for his luxurious lifestyle and grotesque overconfidence - as if lying isn't lying if you believe the lie yourself.

Introductie

Pecunia nervus belli. De Republiek overleefde de oorlogen van de zeventiende eeuw door financiële innovaties die het mogelijk maakten om in crisistijd met geleend geld snel een leger op de been te brengen. Een minder bekend aspect van deze 'financiële revolutie' is dat de overheid aanvankelijk niet alleen obligaties, maar ook levensverzekeringen uitschreef. Dat liep nogal eens fout af, want vaak bleek de inleg te laag om de uitkeringen te kunnen financieren en na de sociale onrust van 1747-1748 trok de overheid zich dan ook terug uit de verliesgevende verzekeringsmarkt - het was niet langer vanzelfsprekend dat men met te goedkope verzekeringen de gegoede burgerij subsidieerde. In 1747 werd er nog voor een aanzienlijk bedrag aan lijfrentes uitgeschreven. In 1748, 1749 en 1750 ging het om kleinere bedragen. Daarna hield deze risicovolle vorm van staatsfinanciering definitief op.[2]

Dit maakte het speelveld vrij voor particuliere initiatieven. Tot degenen die hun kans grepen behoorde de voormalige belastingambtenaar en pamflettist Johannes van der Hey (1726-1812/13). In 1759 richtte hij zijn eerste verzekeringsbedrijf op, *Quod promiseris praestato* (hetgeen men belooft moet men nakomen). Er volgden er nog drie, *Magnos & parvos mors truculenta rapit* (de dood spaart groot noch klein), *In melius servat* ('zij spaart het voor een beter') en *Ultimatum est* (het is de laatste). Daarboven plaatste hij in 1767 een holding, de Generale Nederlandsche Praebenden Compagnie, later de Generale Nederlandsche Lyfrenten Compagnie.

In de eerste jaren was de belangstelling overweldigend. Vooral regenten, ambtenaren, officieren en predikanten schreven zich *en masse* in. Zij werden

1 [W. Ockers], *Vrymoedige bedenkingen*, 1.
2 Liesker en Fritschy, *Gewestelijke financiën: Holland*, 300.

Afb. 1. Simon Fokke, ‘Ter oprichtinge der weduwenbeurzen in 't jaer 1749’, in: *Nederlandsche Jaerboeken* (Amsterdam, F. Houttuin) deel 3-2 (juli-december 1749). Bron: Rijksmuseum, objectnummer RP-P-OB-50.790.

aangelokt door de betrouwbare namen waarmee Van der Hey zich omringde, want de onderneming kreeg naast de administrateur, een secretaris en zeven Amsterdamse directeuren ook nog veertig buitencommissarissen die afkomstig waren uit de Nederlandse bestuurlijke elite. Al even vertrouwenwekkend was de onmiskenbaar solide aandelenportefeuille. Van der Hey belegde in obligaties van de gewesten, van de unie en van de stadhouder, in aandelen van de VOC en in Surinaamse plantageleningen.[3] Dat kon niet fout gaan. Het vermogen van de holding groeide dan ook gestaag. Bij gelegenheid van een nieuwe uitschrijving in 1772 keek Van der Hey vol trots terug op zijn prestaties: zijn onderneming had in totaal 2300 polissen, waarvan 1700 bij *Ultimatum est*. Sinds 1759 was er *f* 1.350.000 ontvangen en *f* 325.000 uitgekeerd. De premieafdracht bedroeg nu tweehonderdduizend gulden en het bedrag aan uitkeringen honderdduizend gulden per jaar.[4] Resultaten uit het verleden bieden echter geen garantie voor de toekomst en de met deze cijfers aangeprezen nieuwe uitschrijving moest bij gebrek aan belangstelling worden ingetrokken.[5] De commissie die onderzoek deed naar de oorzaken van deze onverwachte tegenvaller constateerde dat het kunstje was afgekeken en dat er inmiddels mededingers op de markt waren, met name de Overijsselsche Prebenden Sociëteit te Kampen, die door hun strengere toelatingseisen de klant een hoger rendement boden. De oplossing lag dus voor de hand. De Generale Nederlandsche Lyfrenten Compagnie kreeg soortgelijke polisvoorwaarden: degene bij wiens dood de uitkering zou aanvangen mocht voortaan ten hoogste 63 jaar oud zijn. Ook moest hij christen zijn, een respectabel beroep hebben en een gezondheidsverklaring overleggen. En van de begunstigde werd voortaan een doopattestatie of ander bewijs van de juiste leeftijd gevraagd. Een verklaring van hem of haar zelf volstond niet meer.[6]

De getroffen maatregelen hadden echter alleen betrekking op nieuwe polissen en boden geen soelaas voor de tekortkomingen van de bestaande overeenkomsten. De Generale Nederlandsche Lyfrenten Compagnie was veel te groots opgezet. Het uitgebreide netwerk van tussenpersonen die jaarlijks vijf dagen in Amsterdam bijeen kwamen genereerde weliswaar veel vertrouwen,

3 De bronnen vermelden voornamelijk Nederlandse effecten, met daarnaast Zweedse, Russische en Franse waardepapieren.

4 J. van der Hey, 'Voorbericht', in: *Contract van de Generale Nederlandsche Lyfrenten Compagnie* (Amsterdam: Erven F. Houttuyn en W.H. Dronsberg, 1772).

5 ONA 14327 akte 640 (Pieter de Wilde, 16 september 1772).

6 ONA 11648 akte 540 (Everard Haverkamp, 20 augustus 1773). Cf. de uitvoerige aanprijzing van de nieuwe polisvoorwaarden in de *Nieuwe Nederlandsche Jaerboeken*, deel 8-2, 1230-1283 (oktober 1773).

Afb. 2. Typerend voor de bedrijfscultuur uit de beginjaren is dit wijnglas met deksel uit de collectie van het Rijksmuseum. Het glas heeft drie gegraveerde teksten: op het deksel ‘ultimatum est’, op de kelk ‘zij ontvangt genoeg om bestendig te geeven’ en op het voetstuk ‘gesticht door Johs. v.d. Hey Jacobsz primo mey 1766’. Bron: Rijksmuseum, objectnummer BK NM 10754-257.

maar de kosten waren aanzienlijk.[7] Daarnaast was er te veel personeel in dienst, onder wie ook opvallend veel familieleden: Van der Heys broer Jacob, jeneverstoker te Weesp, mocht zich tot zijn overlijden in 1774 titulair secretaris noemen. Diens zonen Johannes en Gijsbert werkten op kantoor als respectievelijk boekhouder en kopiist, waarbij de eerstgenoemde ook nog was aangemerkt als de beoogde opvolger van zijn oom.[8] Verder kenmerkte de bedrijfsvoering zich door gewichtigdoenerij en overbodige administratieve rompslomp. In het notarieel archief wemelt het van de notulen van maanden jaarvergaderingen. Ook allerlei andere besluiten werden gedocumenteerd met een notarieel declaratoir. Zo was het gebruikelijk dat nieuwbenoemde directeuren ten overstaan van een notaris verklaarden dat ze hun functie naar eer en geweten zouden vervullen. Soms doet het formalisme zelfs lachwekkend aan, bijvoorbeeld bij het grote aantal notariële aanmaningen van de administrateur Van der Hey aan zichzelf als gemachtigde van polishouders met een betalingsachterstand.

Er was echter een nog veel structureler probleem. Van der Hey had zijn onderneming aangeprezen met commercieel aanlokkelijke, maar weinig betrouwbare demografische berekeningen. Dat werd hem in 1767 publiekelijk aangewreven door Frederik Hendrik van der Beets.[9] Van der Hey aarzelde even alvorens te reageren, want Van der Beets fungeerde wellicht als de spreekbuis van zijn oom Willem Kersseboom - een autoriteit op het gebied van de demografie die vanwege zijn hoge ambtelijke functie niet geneigd was om zich te mengen in een publieke discussie - maar antwoordde vervolgens met veel dedain dat Van der Beets geen verstand had van statistiek en dat de Generale Nederlandsche Lyfrenten Compagnie tot in lengte van dagen kredietwaardig zou blijven.[10] Niettemin kregen Van der Beets en Kersseboom in 1770 bijval van de Amsterdamse broodschrijver Willem Ockers, die in zijn weekblad *De Koopman* opmerkte dat er de laatste jaren steeds meer pensioenfondsen op de markt verschenen omdat de rijken niet meer wisten wat te doen met hun spaargeld. Dat bood kansen aan sluwe ondernemers met mooie verhalen over

7 Zie het overzicht van de uitgaven in het *Onderzoek of de Opgaave van Johannes v.d. Hey. Jacobsz. aan de uitkomst beantwoord*, 9. ONA 14318 akte 492 (Pieter de Wilde, september 1769) vermeldt een post van *f* 1.656 als presentiegeld voor de commissarissen van buiten Amsterdam.

8 ONA 11641 akten 90, 91 en 93 (Everard Haverkamp, 28 februari 1771) en ONA 14310 akte 110 (Pieter de Wilde, 5 maart 1767). De neef en naamgenoot Johannes van der Hey werd na de deconfiture van zijn oom eerst notarisklerk in Weesp en later boekverkoper in Amsterdam.

9 Van der Beets, *Aanmerkingen* (1767) en *Kort antwoord op de zoogen. Bescheiden wederleggingen* (1768). Van der Beets werd later commissaris van het klein zegel bij de rekenkamer van Holland. In 1764 had hij ten behoeve van de stad Elburg een loterij ontworpen.

10 J. van der Hey, *Bescheiden wederleggingen* (1768). Van der Beets kreeg een trap na in [J. van der Hey], *Olipodrigo voor de Brabbel-schryvers* [1768] 3-4.

een onbezorgd inkomen voor weduwen en wezen. Ockers vergeleek al die 'loze opsnijders' met gewiekste kwakzalvers die op de markt met veel geschreeuw hun mooi vormgegeven potjes aanprezen. Uitzonderingen daargelaten zou alleen de initiatiefnemer er beter van worden.[11] Twee jaar later maakte ook de Engelse publicist Richard Price gewag van een Nederlandse verzekeraar - Van der Hey - die goede sier maakte met zijn fantasievolle statistieken.[12]

Van der Hey won het pleit, want de verkoop liep geen merkbare schade op, maar uiteindelijk stelden de feiten de critici in het gelijk: het aantal uitkeringsgerechtigden nam veel sneller toe dan hij had voorspeld. Als gevolg hiervan werd er in 1775 voor het eerst verlies geleden. Het ging om een bescheiden bedrag, 8.845 gulden, maar in 1776 steeg het tekort naar 20.892 gulden en in 1777 naar 47.061 gulden.[13] De oplopende verliezen dwongen tot harde maatregelen. Besloten werd de jaarlijkse premie te verhogen en de pensioenen te korten. Boze leden tekenden echter onmiddellijk protest aan tegen de voorgenomen premieverhoging voor bestaande polissen. Tegelijkertijd besloot de eigenaar-oprichter, wiens naar eigen zeggen onfeilbare demografische berekeningen simpelweg niet uitkwamen, zijn onvermijdelijke ondergang niet af te wachten. Als gemachtigde van een aanzienlijk aantal polishouders moest hij jaarlijks hun premies afdragen. In september 1777 ging hij er met het hem toevertrouwde geld vandoor, waarna het bestuur constateerde dat er een bedrag van 136.000 gulden ontbrak.[14]

De diefstal deed de gemoederen hoog oplaaien. De commissarissen waren van mening dat de polishouders die hun geld aan Van der Hey hadden toevertrouwd niet aan hun verplichtingen jegens de onderneming hadden voldaan. Zij werden dan ook geacht hun premie opnieuw te betalen. De betreffende polishouders waren het daarmee niet eens en dreigden de commissarissen in gebreke te stellen wegens hun gebrek aan toezicht. Aangezien de pensioenen werden uitbetaald op 1 mei 1778 had men enkele maanden respijt, maar toen op de betaaldag de Generale Nederlandsche Lyfrenten Compagnie haar betalingsverplichtingen niet nakwam, liet een aantal gedupeerden beslag leggen op het vermogen van de onderneming.

Er dreigde een juridisch pandemonium. Om dit te voorkomen bepaalde de gewestelijke overheid dat het Hof van Holland de zaak zou afwikkelen. De twee hiertoe gecommitteerde raadsleden hadden echter de grootst mogelijke

11 *De Koopman*, deel 3, nrs. 4-6 (mei-juni 1770) 25-48.
12 Price, *Observations*, ix-x.
13 *Onderzoek of de Opgaave van Johannes v.d. Hey, Jacobsz. aan de uitkomst beantwoord*, 4.
14 Op 22 september was Van der Heij al niet meer aanwezig. ONA 15311 akte 673 (Nathanael Wilthuijzen, 22 september 1777).

moeite om tot een voor alle partijen aanvaardbaar en tevens juridisch haalbaar reddingsplan te komen. Er werd overeengekomen dat de protesterende leden het beslag zouden opheffen zodat de achterstallige pensioenen van 1 mei 1778 alsnog konden worden uitgekeerd. Toen het beslag werd opgeheven bleek echter dat veel polishouders niet langer bereid waren premies af te dragen en daarmee kwam de voorgenomen uitkering in gevaar. Na rijp beraad besloot het Hof dat de uitkeringstrekkers genoegen moesten nemen met een kwart van het bedrag waarop ze recht hadden.[15]

Vervolgens moesten de raadsheren nog een laatste obstakel uit de weg ruimen en dat was Johannes van der Hey. Zijn malversaties als gemachtigde van een aantal polishouders hadden zijn positie als eigenaar volstrekt onhoudbaar gemaakt, maar hijzelf vond dat hij een onvervreemdbaar recht had op het administrateurschap en de statuten stelden hem formeel in het gelijk.[16] Van der Hey, die weinig begrip toonde voor de tegenwerking die hij als afwezige en onder verdenking staande eigenaar ondervond, publiceerde in januari 1780 een *Memorie* waarin hij ontkende dat er sprake was geweest van onregelmatigheden in de boekhouding. Tevens beweerde hij dat al zijn gegarandeerd succesvolle reddingsplannen moedwillig gesaboteerd waren.[17] In plaats van te voldoen aan de opdracht van de Staten om de onderneming te redden, had het Hof willens en wetens aangestuurd op een faillissement.[18] Hij had de raadsheren willen wraken, maar in een flagrante schending van de rechtsstatelijke beginselen was deze procedure door de Staten van Holland afgesneden.[19] Als reactie op deze verwijten verbood het Hof de *Memorie*.[20] Van der Hey begreep dat er geen redden meer aan was en nam genoegen met een afkoopsom van 22.000 gulden.[21]

Zo was de weg vrij voor een doorstart zonder Van der Hey. De ‘geredresseerde’ Generale Nederlandsche Lyfrenten Compagnie ging uit van een herzien demografisch model, want een geraadpleegde deskundige op het gebied van de actuariële statistiek, Abraham Gallas, constateerde ‘dat de uitgeloofde voordeelen geen de minste overeenkomst nog evenreedigheid

15 Hof van Holland 333 (resolutieboek, 26 maart en 17 juni 1779). De resolutie van 17 juni is opgenomen in *Nieuwe Nederlandsche Jaerboeken*, deel 14-1 (januari-juni 1779) 559-563.
16 Hof van Holland 334 (resolutieboek, 21 juli en 19 september 1780). De afkoopsom wordt ook vermeld in het *Reglement der geredresseerde Generaale Nederlandsche Lyfrente-Compagnie*, X-XI en in J. van der Hey to the American Commissioners, 30 juli 1783 (op internet gepubliceerde brief uit de Franklin Papers).
17 Hof van Holland 334 (resolutieboek, 23 februari 1780).
18 J. van der Hey, *Memorie*, 7-8.
19 Ibidem, 10.
20 *Nieuwe Nederlandsche Jaerboeken*, deel 15-1 (januari-juni 1780) 206-207. Hof van Holland 5518.4 (criminele papieren) bevat een exemplaar van de *Memorie*.
21 Hof van Holland 334 (resolutieboek, 19 september 1780).

hadden met de betaalde contributien'.[22] De achterstallige contributies en pensioenen van de drie laatste jaren werden uit de boeken geschrapt, de lopende pensioenen werden gekort en de organisatie ging volledig op de schop. Er kwam een plattere bestuursstructuur zonder buitencommissarissen en dus ook zonder meerdaagse jaarvergaderingen. Voortaan zouden de zaken worden afgehandeld door vier Amsterdamse commissarissen, de nieuwe administrateur Nicolaas Tiedeman, een boekhouder, een klerk en een knecht. De twee ijzeren kisten met zo'n 650.000 gulden aan waardepapieren werden gedeponeerd bij notaris Nathanael Wilthuijzen. Die zou zich eenmaal per jaar vergewissen van de inhoud en tegelijkertijd bij de wisselbank en bij de kassiers Beek & Lodewijks het saldo controleren.[23]

Het hielp niet. Er werd nauwelijks nog premie afgedragen, dus moesten de in het verleden opgebouwde rechten worden betaald uit de rente-inkomsten van de effectenportefeuille, waarbij eventueel langzaam kon worden ingeteerd op het eigen vermogen. Dat eigen vermogen verdampte echter aangezien er vanaf het einde van de jaren tachtig over de Surinaamse plantageleningen ter waarde van 63.000 gulden en over een lening van 9.000 gulden aan de Koning van Frankrijk geen interest meer ontvangen werd. Daarmee moest circa 14% van het bezit in feite worden afgeschreven. Om dit te ondervangen volgde de ene bezuinigingsronde op de andere, waarbij de organisatie werd teruggebracht tot het allernoodzakelijkste, te weten Tiedeman en diens boekhouder met assistentie van één commissaris.[24] De uitgaven bleven echter groter dan de inkomsten en in juni 1796 werd dan ook besloten de Lyfrenten Compagnie te ontbinden. Illustratief voor de financiële rampspoed van de laatste jaren was dat de effectenportefeuille bij de verkoop slechts 42% van de nominale waarde opbracht.[25]

Beeldvorming

In 1796, toen beleggers en investeerders vrijwel dagelijks tegoeden moesten afschrijven, ging de ondergang van de Generale Nederlandsche Lyfrenten

22 *Reglement der geredresseerde Generaale Nederlandsche Lyfrente-Compagnie*, V. Abraham Gallas was de auteur van de *Kortbondige en stelkonstige verhandeling over den aart der lijfrenten, tontinen, weduwe-beursen en andere negotiatiën* (1775).

23 Hof van Holland 333 (resolutieboek, 26 maart 1779). Cf. het verslag van deze resolutie in (Batavus), *Missive van een Lid der Neederlandsche Prebende Compagnie*. De hoogte van de uitkering over de voorbije jaren werd bepaald op 25%, zie Hof van Holland 333 (resolutieboek, 17 juni 1779).

24 Hof van Holland 347 (resolutieboek, 26 maart en 19 april 1790).

25 De papieren met een nominale waarde van *f* 340.307 brachten slechts *f* 142.332 op, zie Hof van Holland 7906 (boedelrekening van de GNLC, 1797).

Compagnie onopgemerkt voorbij.[26] In 1777 was men nog anders gewend en lag het niet nakomen van afspraken veel gevoeliger, hetgeen blijkt uit de verschijning van een aantal pamfletten. Een ‘heer uit Leiden’ concludeerde dat Van der Hey de zaken te rooskleurig had voorgespiegeld. Goede raad was duur, maar in ieder geval moest de administrateur met zijn riante salaris onmiddellijk worden ontslagen.[27] Willem Ockers haakte hierop in. Met veel innuendo merkte hij op dat er inderdaad kon worden bezuinigd op de administrateur, aangezien diens salaris ‘genoten wordende uit de contributien en pensioenen, niet moet dienen om iemand een wulpsch leven te doen leiden, maar alleen een vergelding zyn moet voor zyn moeite’. Van der Hey zou daar geen bezwaar tegen kunnen maken, ‘dewyl den Administrateur niet gedagt kan worden deze Compagnie te hebben gestigt, alleen ten zynen particulieren voordeel, daar hy by zyne Contracten heeft voorgegeven, dezelve te hebben ingerigt, om aan zyne Medemenschen nuttig te zyn’.[28] Overigens zou het misschien beter zijn om hem gewoonweg te ontslaan, want de schrijver had vernomen ‘dat des Administrateurs naam in Amsterdam te noemen, tegenswoordig alleen genoeg zyn zou, om ieder één af te schrikken van het deel neemen in deze Compagnie’.[29] Aangezien Van der Hey niet bepaald geliefd was, publiceerde Ockers nog een aantal vervolgpamfletten, maar na de vlucht van zijn slachtoffer koos hij daarbij voor een minder bedekte vorm van spot. In 1778 verscheen *De ontpluimde geheim-raad, Of de door Hoogmoed Nedergestorte Administrateur*, in 1779 de *Oeconomische brief van Jan Alleman aan Jan Heydervan* en in 1780 de *Vrymoedige bedenkingen over de Stoute, verregaande, Assurante en veel geruchtmaakende Memorie van J. van der Hey*. Daarnaast deed een onbekende collega-broodschrijver een duit in het zakje met zijn ‘Levens-schets van Jan van der Hey’.

Dit publieke misprijzen laat zich verklaren. Natuurlijk waren er wel meer fraudezaken, maar Van der Hey had zich jarenlang in de kijker gespeeld. Zo voldeed hij in 1764 aan het opmerkelijke verzoek van de betrokken families om een getrouwde man, de brouwer Nicolaas O'Brenan, en de minderjarige Cornelia Gildemeester uit Frankrijk terug te halen - geen gemakkelijke opdracht, maar het lukte hem.[30] Een ander kunststukje was zijn tweede

26 In de jaren tachtig hadden veel Nederlanders Franse lijfrentes afgesloten. Die werden na de Franse Revolutie niet meer uitbetaald.
27 *Brief van een Leids heer zig in 's Gravenhage bevindende*.
28 *Eenige Poincten van Menage en Redres*, 6-7.
29 Ibidem, 10.
30 ONA 13444 akte 231 (Willem Decker junior, 6 juli 1764) en NADH, archief 1.02.14 (legatie Frankrijk) 522.

huwelijk. In 1766 scheidden Van der Hey en zijn eerste echtgenote van tafel en bed.[31] In 1767 maken de notariële protocollen gewag van een geliefde, Esther Anna Lopick.[32] Enige jaren later werd haar plaats ingenomen door Debora Catharina von Feichenhauer, met wie hij in 1774 in het huwelijk trad. Eigenlijk kon dat niet, want de bruidegom mocht niet hertrouwen, maar Frederik II had de Pruisische huwelijkswetgeving gemoderniseerd en daardoor was het over de grens wél mogelijk om volledig te scheiden. Van der Hey werd Pruisisch staatsburger, reisde af naar Kleef en keerde als getrouwd man in Amsterdam terug.

Van der Hey trok echter vooral de aandacht als archetypische nouveaux riche. Debora Catharina von Feichenhauer, geboren in 1751 en dus veel jonger dan Van der Hey, was een jong ding met wie hij gezien mocht worden en op zijn nieuwverworven hofstede Kievitsheuvel in Abcoude omringde hij zich met veel pracht en praal. Daarnaast mat hij zich een protserige titulatuur aan: via zijn buitencommissarissen had Van der Hey connecties in Zeeland. Dat gewest had geld nodig. Van der Hey wierp zich op als adviseur. In december 1768 diende hij een voorstel in om vijf miljoen gulden op te halen door het uitschrijven van een tontine.[33] Zeeland heeft de plannen nooit uitgevoerd en wilde de financiële problemen aanpakken door vermindering van de gewestelijke bijdrage aan de generaliteit, maar het leverde hem wel de eretitel ‘commis van Zeeland’ op. Ook noemde hij zich geheimraad van de Koning van Pruisen. Nog opvallender was de stichting van een eigen vrijmetselaarsloge, *Virtutis et artis amici*.[34] Over de activiteiten is weinig bekend. Wellicht bezochten de leden in verenigingsverband de schouwburg, want in 1774 hekelde een pamflettist de wansmaak van het Amsterdamse publiek. Dat publiek verdiende de geselpaal, want het applaudisseerde voor wanstaltig ‘balkende’ acteurs en floot de acteurs met een natuurlijke speelstijl steevast uit. De onbekende pamflettist kreeg antwoord van een gezelschap onder de zinspreuk *Virtutis et artis amici* dat de gewraakte declamerende speelstijl verdedigde.[35]

Wat hem naast zijn flamboyante levensstijl ook tot mikpunt van spot

31 ONA 14309 akte 529 (Pieter de Wilde, 18 oktober 1766) en akte 585 (15 november 1766). SAA, bestand 5061 (oud rechterlijk archief) 1404 (vierschaar 18, 20 en 21 november 1766, stukken van procureur Noelmans).

32 ONA 14310 akten 117 en 118 (Pieter de Wilde, 7 maart 1767).

33 NADH, archief 3.01.26 (L.P. van de Spiegel), nr. 537 (memorie van Johannes van der Hey, 22 december 1768 en toelichting hierop, 14 juli 1769).

34 Van Loo, *Geschiedenis*, 30: opgericht 25 november 1763 op een Engelse constitutie en opgeheven op 17 mei 1778 (dus na de vlucht van Van der Hey). De loge heeft geen eigen archief nagelaten, maar figureert in het archief van een andere loge, want omdat de orde weigerde de loge te erkennen, zochten Van der Hey en de zijnen tijdelijk hun heil bij *Concordia Vincit Animos*.

35 *Brief van zeker op reis zynden Dordrechtsen Heer*.

maakte, was zijn volslagen gebrek aan bescheidenheid. Met veel flux de bouche beweerde Van der Hey keer op keer dat hij zijn verzekeringsmaatschappij had opgericht om de mensheid van dienst te zijn. ‘Het Geheele Oogmerk van de Inrichtingen, dezes Maatschappy, is, om de Menschelyke Maatschappy, in het Algemeen, Belangeloos ten nutte te zyn; dit moet dan in alle gevallen blyken; en daarin zullen steeds myne voornaamste Pogingen bestaan’.[36] Deze zelfbeleden belangeloosheid stond echter in schril contrast met de financiële praktijk. Van der Hey zorgde eerst en vooral goed voor zichzelf. Niet alleen genoot hij een exorbitant salaris, maar hij maakte ook gebruik van de dubieuze verzekeringsderivaten van met name *Ultimatum est*, dat in tegenstelling tot de traditionele weduwenfondsen de mogelijkheid bood om een verzekering af te sluiten op het leven van een derde partij (niet de vader of echtgenoot), zodat verzekeringsnemers rijk konden worden door een medische attestatie te ritselen van iemand die op sterven na dood was. In maart 1767 sloot Van der Hey samen met Esther Anna Lopick, op dat moment zijn levenspartner, een polis af op het leven van Hendrik Hesinkvelt, die geboren was in 1705.[37] Hetzelfde deed hij in 1773 met Debora Catharina van Felchenhauer: voor haar regelde hij een polis op naam van Suzanna de Dompiere de Jonquières, die geboren was in 1718.[38]

De psychologie van de bedrieger

Dat ‘gebrek aan bescheidenheid’ is eigenlijk een understatement. Op grond van archivalische bronnen van ná 1777 kan worden betoogd dat Van der Hey leed aan megalomanie. Als verzekeringsman toonde hij al een onbegrensd geloof in eigen kunnen en dat werd er mettertijd niet minder op. Na zijn gedwongen vertrek uit Amsterdam vestigde Van der Hey zich in Kortrijk. In april 1782 maakte hij de oversteek naar Londen.[39] Dat bood hem de gelegenheid om zijn diensten aan te bieden aan twee Zeeuwse politici, raadpensionaris Chalmers en secretaris Van de Spiegel. De Vierde Engelse Oorlog was nog steeds niet

36 *Contract en reglement van de Generale Nederlandsche Lyfrenten compagnie* (Amsterdam, Erven F. Houttuyn en W.H. Dronsberg, 1772), voorwoord.

37 ONA 12868 akte 115 (Hermanus van Heel, januari-maart 1767) polis 400 van 5 maart 1767. Ook in december 1767 en juni 1771 sloot Van der Hey polissen af voor Lopick, zie ONA 13896 akte 71 (Kier van der Piet, 1766-1769) polis 863B op naam van Cornells Floh, geboren in 1716. Cf. ONA 14325 akte 303 (Pieter de Wilde, 5 juni 1771) polis 1108, op de eigen naam.

38 ONA 14331 akte 240 polis 1836 (Pieter de Wilde, januari-april 1774) vermeldt als geboorteplaats en - datum: Kaap de Goede Hoop, 7 juni 1751. Haar ouders Harrier Felchenhauer en Jacoba Möller woonden in 1752 in Kopenhagen, zie de Resoluties van de Staten van Holland, 19 januari 1753.

39 J. van der Hey to the American Commissioners, 30 juli 1783 (op internet gepubliceerde brief uit de Franklin Papers). Van der Hey en Van der Capellen tot den Pol kenden elkaar, zie J. van der Hey aan J.D. van der Capellen tot den Pol, Brussel, 3 augustus 1783, in: W.H. de Beaufort (red.), *Brieven van en aan Joan Derek van der Capellen van de Poll* (Utrecht 1879).

beëindigd en Van der Hey schreef dat hij in Londen van nut kon zijn bij eventuele vredesonderhandelingen. Over wat er daarna gebeurde lopen de lezingen uiteen. De beschikbare bronnen doen vermoeden dat Van de Spiegel de grootst mogelijke moeite had om zijn correspondent in toom te houden. Van der Hey moest uitzoeken of Engeland geneigd was om de koloniale bezittingen te restitueren en schadevergoeding te betalen. Hij beperkte zich echter niet tot inlichtingenwerk, maar begon diplomatieke onderhandelingen, waarna Van de Spiegel zijn handen ervan af trok.[40] Van der Hey beweerde achteraf dat hij een vredesverdrag had geregeld toen de Engelse minister-president overleed. In de verwarring die toen ontstond waren anderen echter met de eer gaan strijken. Desalniettemin had hij ontegenzeggelijk recht op een riante beloning. Zo kwam het uiteindelijk tot een breuk tussen de voormalige vrienden. Van de Spiegel vond dat Van der Hey tevreden mocht zijn met een onkostenvergoeding. Dat het met diens financiën slecht gesteld was, gaf hem niet het recht om Van de Spiegel op een zo impertinente wijze te schrijven. Hij sloot af met een verzuchting: 'Hiermede hope ik bevrijdt te zullen zijn van meerder brieven in zulken stijl als de twee laatste van U.W.E. te ontvangen. Ik wensch U.W.E. van harten verbetering van fortuin, waaraan ik niet twijffelen zoude, indien uwe moderatie zoo groot was als uwe kundigheden'.[41]

Vervolgens kwam Van der Hey op de gedachte dat de Verenigde Staten ernstig verlegen zaten om zijn expertise als financieel adviseur. Hij schreef een sollicitatiebrief waarin hij zichzelf een opmerkelijke rol in de Nederlandse geschiedenis toebedacht. Zo presenteerde hij zich als de bedenker van het belastingstelsel van 1749 en van de neutraliteitspolitiek van 1758. Om zijn grote verdiensten voor het vaderland hadden de Amsterdamse burgemeesters hem een standbeeld op de Dam aangeboden, maar bescheiden als hij was had Van der Hey dit aanbod afgeslagen. En de Staten van Zeeland waren hem innig dankbaar voor het gezond maken van de Zeeuwse financiën. Vanzelfsprekend anticipeerde hij op de kwade geruchten die over hem de ronde deden en die mogelijk ook de Verenigde Staten zouden bereiken: zijn verzekeringsbedrijf was willens en wetens ten onder gebracht door de Hertog van Brunswijk, die (als man die in een veldslag zijn testikels verloren had, maar dat schreef Van der Hey er niet bij) jaloers was op het gezinsleven van Van der Hey met zijn jonge echtgenote en hun dochtertje. Mochten de Verenigde Staten nog niet overtuigd zijn van zijn excellente kwaliteiten, dan konden zij inlichtingen

40 Van de Spiegel aan Van der Hey, 20 juni en 17 juli 1782, in: *Archives*, 231-233 en 235-236.
41 Van de Spiegel aan Van der Hey, 12 augustus 1782, in: *Archives*, 237-239.

inwinnen bij burgemeester Hendrik Hooft in Amsterdam, raadpensionaris Johan Marinus Chalmers in Zeeland, jonker Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol in Appeltern, Adolf Warner baron Van Pallandt van Zuitheim in IJsselmuiden en Pieter Feith in Zwolle.[42]

Vermoedelijk hebben de Verenigde Staten nooit geantwoord, hetgeen Van der Hey de gelegenheid gaf om in alle rust enkele boeken over de staatsschuld te schrijven.[43] Pas na de Pruisische inval van 1787 kwam hij weer voor het voetlicht. Duizenden patriotten zochten hun toevlucht in de Oostenrijkse Nederlanden en in Frankrijk. Aanvankelijk maakte Frankrijk zich nog illusies over het economische potentieel van de vluchtelingen. Om die reden werden zij voorzien van financiële bijstand. Toen dook daar plots Johannes van der Hey op, die zich geheel onbaatzuchtig beschikbaar stelde voor een administratieve rol bij de verdeling van het beschikbare geld. Bovendien zag hij voor zichzelf ook een taak weggelegd in de verzoening van de patriotten met de stadhouder. In dat kader schreef hij een ontwerp-grondwet voor de Republiek, met een stadhouder zonder politieke benoemingsrechten. Zijn 'conciliair plan van redres' moest worden gerealiseerd door de grote mogendheden in samenwerking met de gematigde patriotten die een overeenkomst met de stadhouder niet uitsloten. Ter aanbeveling van dit plan deinsde hij andermaal niet terug voor een brutaal stukje geschiedvervalsing: Van der Hey pretendeerde ervaring te hebben met het schrijven van grondwetten, want in september of oktober 1783 had hij aan de Amerikaanse gezant Henry Laurens een plan overhandigd dat later met enige wijzigingen was aangenomen als de Amerikaanse constitutie.[44]

Vanzelfsprekend kreeg Van der Hey niet het toezicht over de verdeling van de Franse staatssteun en ook van zijn grondwet werd verder niets meer vernomen, maar zijn optreden wekte wel enige achterdocht bij de radicale patriotten die droomden van een militaire invasie van de Republiek. Een van hen, Pierre Alexandre Dumont Pigalle, legde veiligheidshalve een dossier aan van die welbespraakte en dus gevaarlijke tegenstander.[45] Dit dossier is de laatste goede archivalische bron. De gloriejaren waren voorbij. In 1796

42 J. van der Hey to the American Commissioners, 30 juli 1783 (op internet gepubliceerde brief uit de Franklin Papers).

43 J. van der Hey, *Traité sur la finance. Ouvrage utile aux Anglais, Français, Autrichiens, aux politiques, négociants, & à tous autres citoyens* (1784). J. van der Hey, *Observations politiques, morales et expérimentées, sur les vrais principles de la finance, suivies d'un essay sur les moyens de réforme pour les finances de la Grande Bretagne* (1784). J. van der Hey, *Essays of reform on the system of the finances of Great Britain, for re-establishing the public credit* (1785). In 1787 nam hij contact op met de stadhouder, zie Koninklijk Huis Archief, archief Willem V, 1074 (brieven van J. van der Hey te Bristol, 1787).

44 'Conciliair concept plan van redres voor de Republiek', in NADH, archief 2.21.057 (P.A. Dumont-Pigalle) 6 (cahier J. van der Hey).

45 NADH, Dumont Pigalle 6.

vroeg Van der Hey, vermoedelijk vanuit Kortrijk, toestemming om terug te keren.[46] Hoewel hij ooit 136.000 gulden had achterovergedrukt, was hij na al die jaren en in het licht van de veranderde omstandigheden kennelijk niet meer bevreesd voor eventuele schuldeisers. Helaas viel zijn nieuwe woonplaats niet te achterhalen.[47] Hoe dan ook, hij dacht nog steeds groot, want drie jaar later ontving de Nationale Vergadering een brief van hem met annex enige stukken 'betrekkelyk het oprichten van eene Nationale en de Comptes bank'.[48] Het voorstel werd ter notificatie aangenomen. Het was de laatste poging van Van der Hey om zich in het maatschappelijke debat te mengen. Misschien heeft hij als ervaren publicist in het begin van de negentiende eeuw nog wat handen spandiensten mogen verlenen aan zijn neef en naamgenoot, de succesvolle boekverkoper en uitgever Johannes van der Hey, maar het waren kommervolle tijden, dus is het niet ondenkbaar dat hij in 1812 of 1813 gestorven is zoals zo veel bedriegers: berooid en tijdens zijn leven al min of meer vergeten.[49]

Het belang van het detail

Van der Hey poseerde als een staatkundig en financieel genie, maar de werkelijkheid was anders. Hij heeft nooit en te nimmer een rol van betekenis gespeeld. Is het dan zinvol om tweehonderd jaar later alsnog onderzoek te doen naar zo'n ietwat smoezelige charlatan? Is het niet veelbetekenend dat historici nooit veel aandacht hebben geschonken aan Van der Hey en zijn verzekeringsmaatschappij?[50] De vraag naar de zin van dit artikel ligt voor de hand. Toch maakt alleen al het megalomane karakter van Van der Hey hem het bestuderen meer dan waard. Hij laat zich goed vergelijken met een moderne *overconfident CEO*. Er zijn wel meer parallellen. Ook in de achttiende eeuw werden klanten aangelokt door ronkende teksten die meer beloofden dan kon worden waargemaakt. De juridisch onontkoombare gouden handdruk voor de onbekwame bestuurder blijkt eveneens van alle tijden: de Generale Nederlandsche Lyfrenten Compagnie kon niet worden voortgezet zonder dat Van der Hey was uitgekocht. En de verzekeringsmaatschappij mocht net als

46 *Dagverhaal der Handelingen van de Nationale Vergadering*, deel 1, 446 (9 mei 1796).
47 Volgens de *Lyst van pensioentrekkende en contribueerende leden in de stichting Ultimatum est* (1796) woonde zijn tweede echtgenote D.C. van der Hey-Van Felchenhauer in Nieuweschans bij Groningen, maar het is onbekend of ze nog samen waren.
48 Ibidem, deel 3, 791 (23 januari 1799).
49 Zijn eerste echtgenote omschreef zich in juli 1812 als de gescheiden vrouw en in oktober 1813 als de weduwe van Johannes van der Hey, zie de testamenten van Anna Bastiana van den Berg in Noordhollands Archief, bestand 1617 (Haarlem, oud notarieel archief) 1694 akte 117 (Willem Arnoldus Haselaar, 8 juli 1812) en 1662 akte 132 (Pieter van Lee, 6 oktober 1813).
50 Bos en Stamhuis, 'Begrafenis- en weduwenfondsen, en prebende-sociëteiten', 181 vermeldt dat het niet bekend is hoe het met de Generale Nederlandsche Lyfrenten Compagnie is afgelopen.

de hedendaagse systeembanken niet omvallen, want als oudedagsvoorziening voor de gegoede burgerij was zij nauw gelieerd aan het Ancien Regime. Zo geeft de recente bankencrisis aan de geschiedenis van de Generale Nederlandsche Lijfrenten Compagnie een actueel tintje. Bovendien is het verleidelijk om aan de hand van deze microgeschiedenis te speculeren op meer algemene conclusies. Uiteindelijk ging de Republiek ten onder aan de keerzijde van de 'financiële revolutie' die het land ooit gered had, want de schuldenlast noopte tot hoge belastingen die de economie fnuikten. Het gebruikelijke antwoord op de voor de hand liggende vraag of men dit had kunnen voorkomen door de staatsschuld in betere tijden voor een aanzienlijk deel af te lossen, is dat de Republiek haar burgers niet nog zwaarder had kunnen belasten, maar dat heilige huisje in de Nederlandse geschiedschrijving getuigt van weinig revolutionair elan. Van der Hey profiteerde met zijn zekerheidsarrangementen van een overvloed aan spaargeld dat met veel enthousiasme en weinig inzicht geïnvesteerd werd in een geregeld en risicoloos inkomen. Dat dood kapitaal had beter kunnen worden aangewend, maar in vredestijd ontbrak de politieke wil tot hervormingen. Als de Republiek in de achttiende eeuw wat vaker in een crisis was beland, dan had men na de 'financiële revolutie' misschien wel de moed gehad voor een complementaire 'fiscale revolutie'.

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Convocatie gearresteerd 18 Septemb. 1777 (1777).
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Onderzoek of de Opgaave van den Hoog Edelen Gebooren Gestrengen Heer Administrateur Johannes v.d. Hey, Jacobsz. aan de uitkomst beantwoord; en of de Geintresseerdens reden hebben van zig te vreden te houden met de Administratie en Directie, In de generaale Nederlandsche Lyfrente Compagnie. Waar by een voorslag gedaan wordt van middelen om de vervallende Prebende Societeit staande te houden. Alles nader aangedrongen uit de Leevensschets van den heer Administrateur zelfs [1777].
Richard Price, *Observations on Reversionary Payments* (2e druk, Londen: T. Cadell, 1772).
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F.H. van der Beets, *Aanmerkingen over de onbestaanbaarheid van de weduwe beursen, praebende sociëteiten, en diergelijke fondsen* ('s-Gravenhage: P. van Os, 1767).
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Vrage, is de societeit onder opper-directie van den Heer van der Hey, te Amst. nog Redressabel of niet? En Zoude het beter voor de Geintresseerdens zyn dat die gedissolveert, dan herstelt werde? Voorgedragen in een' Brief van een' Vriend Aan zyn Correspondent te Haerlem, om daer zyn Raadt op in te neemen [1777].

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Archieven

Er is geen bedrijfsarchief bewaard gebleven, maar het Stadsarchief Amsterdam, archief 5075 (oud notarieel archief) [ONA], bevat naast akten met een incidenteel karakter ook gedrukte contracten met daarachter de op het contract ingeschreven polissen,[51]

51 Dergelijke contracten met bijgevoegde polissen zijn aangetroffen bij de notarissen Hermanus van Heel, Dominicus Geniets, François Köhne, Kier van der Piet, Pieter de Wilde, Everard Haverkamp en Willem de Bruijn.

notulen van de jaarvergaderingen[52] en notariële kascontroles.[53] Het Nationaal Archief in Den Haag [NADH], archief 3.03.01.01 (Hof van Holland) bevat boedelrekeningen uit de jaren 1792-1796.[54]

52 ONA 14318 akte 492 (Pieter de Wilde, september 1769), 14320 akte 395 (P. de Wilde, augustus 1770), 11645 akte 486 (Everard Haverkamp, augustus 1772), 11648 akte 540 (E. Haverkamp, augustus 1773), 11651 akte 509 (E. Haverkamp, augustus 1774), 11654 akte 438 (E. Haverkamp, augustus 1775) en 11657 akte 429 (E. Haverkamp, augustus 1776). Na het overlijden van Haverkamp werd de kist die aan hem was toevertrouwd geïnventariseerd, zie ONA 12435 akte 302 (Cornelis van Homrigh, 27 mei 1777).

53 De kascontrole werden van 1782 tot 1792 uitgevoerd door notaris Nathanael Wilthuijzen en vanaf 1793 door Christoffel Reinard Samuel toe Laer, zie ONA 15373 akte 606 (1 november 1782), 15383 akte 601 (11 september 1783), 15395 akte 514 (8 september 1784), 15407 (september 1785), 15419 (september 1786), 15431 akte 470 (6 september 1787), 15443 akte 808 (september 1788), 15455 akte 1000 (september 1789), 15467 akte 1040 (15 september 1790), 15480 akte 907 (3 oktober 1791), 15492 akte 941bis (5 oktober 1792). Zijn opvolger Christoffel Reinard Samuel toe Laer maakte alleen in 1796 een officiële akte op, zie ONA 17870 akte 422 (2 juni 1796). Andere kascontroles van Toe Laer zijn bewaard gebleven in de boedelrekeningen van het Hof van Holland.

54 Hof van Holland 4431 dossier 4 (1792), 4432 dossier 8 (1793), 4438 dossier 8 (1796).

De beproevingen van Marie Blomme
Waarheidsproductie in een achttiende-eeuwse Vlaamse stad

Elwin Hofman

Lies and deceit were common in the eighteenth century. People were well aware of this and used several methods to discover truth. In this article, I discuss the production of truth in the case of Marie Blomme, who claimed to have had a child by the treasurer of the Flemish town of Kortrijk, Joseph Coppieters, in the 1720s. I analyse four forms of truth production: litigation, reputation, confession and self-reflection. I investigate all four forms in terms of their importance, object, method of producing truth, and status as truth. Finally, I propose that the conflicting truths that were the result of these forms of truth production, suggest a lack of concern for authenticity in the early eighteenth century.

Inleiding

‘Hij heeft ghedacht dat ghij hem lief hadt, maer siet nu wel dat het sijn gelt is dat ghij souckt te crijgen’, schreef een anonieme briefschrijver in 1727 aan de twintigjarige Marie Blomme. Hij vervolgde dat ze de stad moest verlaten, want als ze zou blijven, zou ze ‘eere ende reputatie Verliesen ende passeren voor eene hoer, ende leugenachtigh ende vals mens’.[1] Ze waren niet min, de bedreigingen in de brief. Maar was Marie Blomme inderdaad een leugenachtige hoer? Wie was zij, waarom was haar reputatie in het geding, en hoe zat het met die leugens?

De achttiende eeuw was, zo mag uit dit themanummer blijken, rijk aan bedriegers, fraudeurs en schurken. Zowel in de hoogste regionen als in de meest bescheiden kringen werd er volop gelogen. Tegelijk was de tijd van de Verlichting een tijd waarin geleerden meer dan ooit bezeten waren door de aard en het nut van de waarheid. De *philosophes* onderzochten het belang van waarheid, de gevaren van leugens, de oorzaken van vooroordelen en het verband tussen waarheid en geluk. Hoewel hun conclusies ver van eensgezind waren, verenigden hun onderzoeken zich door die grote bekommernis om de plaats van waarheid.[2] Niet alleen geleerden waren echter op zoek naar de waarheid. Ook in de dagelijkse praktijk trachtten gewone mensen doorheen al het bedrog waarheid te vinden.

Zo bijvoorbeeld Marie Blomme. De gebeurtenissen in haar leven bieden

1 Rijksarchief Kortrijk, *Oud Stadsarchief Kortrijk* (verder: *OSAK*) 8055.

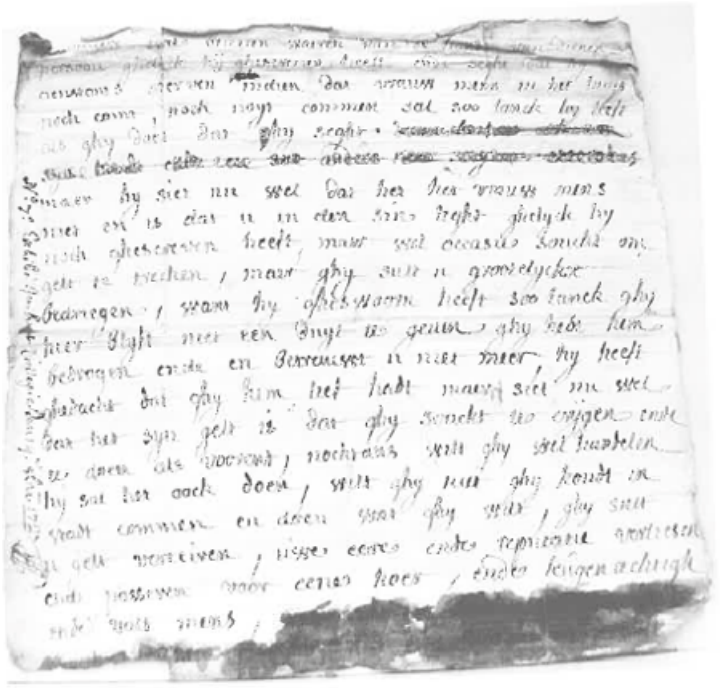
2 Cracker, ‘The Problem of Truth’. Zie voor de bezorgdheid om waarheid en bedrog in de zestiende en zeventiende eeuw ook Van Houdt e.a. (eds.), *On the Edge of Truth and Honesty*.

mogelijkheden om te onderzoeken hoe een gewone sterveling in het dagelijkse leven omging met valse beschuldigingen en welke middelen er waren om de waarheid te achterhalen. Daarover is weinig bekend. Historisch onderzoek naar waarheid focuste tot dusver vooral op ideeën over de epistemologische, metafysische en morele aspecten van waarheid.[3] In de nasleep van Michel Foucaults baanbrekende onderzoek op het domein van kennisproductie werd eveneens onderzocht hoe in de wetenschappen waarheid gecreëerd werd.[4] Ook het achterhalen van waarheid in de biecht kon op enige aandacht rekenen.[5] De aanpak in dit artikel is anders: ik onderzoek niet hoe men in een bepaalde epistemologische traditie tot waarheid kwam, maar hoe met betrekking tot een specifiek voorval via verschillende wegen waarheid werd gecreëerd. Bovendien analyseer ik hier geen theoretische reflecties over waarheid, maar de concrete praktijk van waarheidsproductie.

Hoe waarheid te definiëren? De *Encyclopédie* onderscheidde niet minder dan negen soorten. Algemeen werd 'waarheid' er gedefinieerd als een overeenkomst tussen ons oordeel en *wat de dingen zijn*.[6]. Vanuit filosofisch oogpunt is die definitie niet erg verhelderend: ze verschuift alleen het probleem (wat *zijn* de dingen?). Ze is wel interessant als analytisch hulpmiddel. Deze definitie laat immers toe te onderzoeken in welke mate mensen in het dagelijkse leven refereerden naar waarheid. Zochten ze in hun oordelen over informatie, roddels en bekentenissen naar correspondentie met *wat de dingen zijn*? En hoe deden ze dat? Bovendien kan de definitie helpen om mogelijke tegenstrijdige opvattingen over het concept waarheid duidelijker aan te wijzen.

In dit artikel analyseer ik een incident dat in de jaren 1720 voorviel tussen Marie Blomme en Joseph Coppieters in de Vlaamse stad Kortrijk. Kortrijk telde toen zo'n 11.000 inwoners en was vooral bekend voor haar textielproductie. De stedelijke elite bestond voornamelijk uit rijke kooplieden.[7] Joseph Coppieters, in 1687 geboren in een vermogend gezin, volgde in 1705 zijn vader op als erfelijk stadsontvanger van Kortrijk. Zijn relatie met het stadsbestuur was echter allesbehalve goed: meermaals werd Coppieters door de Kortrijkse schepenen aangeklaagd wegens corruptie.[8] Het voorval met Marie Blomme was van een heel andere aard.

3 Crocker, 'The Problem of Truth'; Fernandez-Armesto, *Truth*.
4 Bv. Shapin, *A Social History of Truth*; Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge*.
5 Foucault, *De wil tot weten*; Hartman, 'Confession as Cultural Form'.
6 'Vérité', *L'Encyclopédie*.
7 Zie over de geschiedenis van Kortrijk in de achttiende eeuw vooral Maddens, 'De nieuwe tijd'.
8 Ibidem, 219-220.



Afb. 1. De anonieme dreigbrief die Marie Blomme in 1727 ontving. Bron: Rijksarchief Kortrijk, OSAK, 8055.

Volgens Blomme overhaalde Joseph Coppieters haar in 1725 om bij hem als

gouvernante te komen werken. Eenmaal in dienst vroeg hij haar om met hem te slapen. Ze weigerde, maar hij deed ‘veele beloften’: hij zou haar huwen, geld geven en in een mooie winkel aanstellen. Uiteindelijk gaf Blomme zich dan ook gewonnen, waarna ze elke nacht tot wel vijf keer seks hadden, alles, uiteraard, in het grootste geheim. Het onvermijdelijke gebeurde echter en Blomme werd zwanger. Om te verhinderen dat hun affaire zou uitlekken, moest ze van Coppieters uit Kortrijk vertrekken, onder de belofte dat ze geld zou krijgen.

Blomme ging met haar moeder naar Gent, maar er kwam geen geld. Na enige tijd en veel onbeantwoorde brieven keerde ze terug naar Kortrijk om haar geld op te eisen. Dat was niet naar Coppieters' zin. Blomme ontving tal van anonieme dreigbrieven, waarvan ze alleen maar kon vermoeden dat ze van Coppieters afkomstig waren. Ze besloot uiteindelijk bij Coppieters langs te gaan. Hij liet haar binnen, nam haar mee naar een kamer en sloot haar daar

vervolgens op. Pas nadat ze documenten ondertekende waarin ze verklaarde dat ze bevrucht was door een andere man dan Coppieters, liet hij haar vrij. Opnieuw eiste hij dat ze de stad zou verlaten, opnieuw beloofde hij haar veel geld. Maar Blomme geloofde hem niet meer. Ze startte een proces om aan haar geld te komen. Het dossier van dat proces is de voornaamste bron van dit artikel.[9]

In de bewaarde documenten vond ik vier wegen waarlangs mensen een oordeel vormden over de gebeurtenissen: via de rechtbank, via reputaties, via de biecht en via zelfreflectie. Elk van die wegen leidde tot een ander verhaal. Deze vier vormen van waarheidsproductie onderzoek ik eerst en vooral op de relevantie van de verkregen waarheid: waarom vond men een bepaalde methode om waarheid te produceren belangrijk? Wat stond er op het spel? Vervolgens licht ik toe wat het precieze object van de waarheid was. Hoewel het grosso modo om dezelfde gebeurtenissen gaat, had elke weg een eigen focus en dat had uiteraard implicaties voor de resulterende waarheid. Daarna sta ik stil bij de eigenlijke methode, *hoe* de waarheid geproduceerd werd. Die beïnvloedde niet alleen het uiteindelijke narratief, maar toont ook aan hoe men meende de waarheid te kunnen bereiken. Ten slotte bestudeer ik de status van de verkregen waarheid. In welke mate was 'waarheid' een belangrijk criterium bij de beoordeling van een bepaald narratief? Was de ene waarheid 'meer waar' en meer waard dan de andere? Hoe werd met conflicterende waarheden omgegaan? Door deze vier vragen systematisch voor elke vorm van waarheidsproductie te behandelen, wordt het mogelijk om beter inzicht te krijgen in de dagdagelijkse omgang met waarheid en bedrog in achttiende eeuw.

De rechtbank

De zaak Coppieters startte op 7 november 1727, toen Marie Catherine Blomme Joseph Coppieters voor de Kortrijkse schepenbank daagde. Ze beweerde dat hij haar onder trouwbelofte had bevrucht en eiste onderhoudsgeld voor haar kind. Twee maanden later, op 17 januari 1728, spande Coppieters Blomme op zijn beurt een proces aan voor laster en eerroof.[10] Het werd een van de meest uitgebreide zaken die de Kortrijkse schepenen in de achttiende eeuw zouden

9 De dossiers van de zaak Blomme-Coppieters zitten verspreid over verschillende archiefnummers: *OSAK* 7749, 8055, 8085, 8786, 9507, 9952, 10064, 11938 en 13967. De getuigenis van Marie Blomme waarop bovenstaande samenvatting gebaseerd is bevindt zich in *OSAK* 8055. Een uitgebreidere uiteenzetting van het proces en de context van de zaak Coppieters is te vinden in Callewier, 'Wellust en bedrog op hoog niveau'.

10 *OSAK* 53.

onderzoeken.

Over het belang van juridische waarheidsproductie kan weinig twijfel bestaan: in de eerste plaats was het de bedoeling een conflict te beëindigen. Twee of meer partijen hadden een onenigheid waar ze via andere wegen niet uit raakten en trokken naar de rechtbank, die als neutrale partij een oordeel moest vellen. Bij een burgerlijk proces, zoals dit, was daar vaak geld mee gemoeid, maar kon ook de reputatie van beide partijen op het spel staan. Een vonnis raakte immers bekend en bestond soms ook in het publiek terugnemen van beledigingen.[11] In strafprocessen, als de eisende partij de openbare aanklager was en een crimineel feit begaan was, konden bovendien nog ingrijpendere straffen uitgesproken worden, zoals verbanning, opsluiting, schandstraffen. lijfstraffen en de doodstraf.[12]

Het precieze object van de juridische waarheid is minder eenvoudig vast te stellen. De schepenen onderzochten, als rechters van dienst, of de eis van de aanklager correct was en ondersteund werd door de vigerende wetten en gewoontes. Dat is vandaag niet anders, maar wat als juridisch relevant gold, was in de achttiende eeuw heel wat beperkter dan vandaag. In deze casus werd enkel onderzocht of Joseph Coppieters inderdaad de vader van het kind van Blomme was en hij dus alimentatie moest betalen, een type proces dat vaak als 'vaderschapsactie' wordt benoemd. De schepenen zochten daarbij naar materiële feiten, niet naar motivaties. Toch verzamelden de schepenen ook heel wat informatie die helemaal niet juridisch relevant was. In principe mocht dat hun oordeel echter niet beïnvloeden. De rechters hadden enkel tot doel vast te stellen of Coppieters met zekerheid de enige was die Blomme bevrucht kon hebben. Een belangrijke voorwaarde die daarvoor vaak gehanteerd werd, was dat Blomme voor haar betrekkingen met Coppieters maagd was. In de regel toonden vrouwen in succesvolle vaderschapsacties ook aan dat hen door de man in kwestie een huwelijk beloofd was.[13] De focus op die voorwaarden zorgde ervoor dat het voorwerp van het onderzoek enigszins beperkt bleef.

Een gevolg van die enge focus was dat er weinig interesse getoond werd in seksualiteit, bijvoorbeeld in de vraag of Blomme verkracht was, of in de vraag of Coppieters perversiteiten had begaan.[14] In haar uitgebreide getuigenis vertelde Blomme immers dat Coppieters zich graag als non verkleedde, en

11 'Revocatie van injurien' was bijvoorbeeld de eis in *OSAK* 11448.
12 Monballyu, *Zes eeuwen strafrecht*.
13 Van Meeteren, *Op hoop van akkoord*, 295-298.
14 Een dergelijk onderzoek zou de focus van een crimineel proces kunnen vormen, maar dat is er - om onduidelijke redenen - niet gekomen.

dat ze hem moest geselen om hij anders niet ‘amoureus’ kon worden.[15] In een eerste verhoor werd Coppieters naar die feiten gevraagd: de schepenen waren kennelijk toch geïnteresseerd in die ongebruikelijke gedragingen. Hij ontkende en voegde toe ‘dat hij meende op alle de voorenstaende articlen niet te moeten antwoorden als niet reguarderende het officie[,] niet te min sulckx wel te hebben willen doen alhoewel ongehouden’.[16] In latere verhoren werd op die kwestie inderdaad niet meer ingegaan.[17] Het juridisch onderzoek moest beperkt blijven tot de ter zake doende feiten en daar was een man als Coppieters goed van op de hoogte.

Ik raakte al aan de methode van juridische waarheidsproductie. Het uitgangspunt was dat rechters op een onpartijdige wijze de waarheid trachtten te achterhalen. Bij de intreding in hun ambt moesten ze een eed afleggen dat ze goed en oprecht recht zouden spreken.[18] Daarvoor hanteerden ze een duidelijke procedure. De initiërende partij uitte een eis, waarop de verdediging kon antwoorden. Eventueel kon de eerste partij daarop weer reageren, waarna de tweede partij ook weer aan bod kon komen. Beide partijen legden vervolgens een bewijsvoering voor hun zaak voor, met argumentaties, attestaties en dies meer. Ze kregen de kans om op elkaars bewijsvoeringen te reageren, door getuigen te wraken of bewijsstukken te weerleggen, of hun eigen bewijsstukken weer van die weerleggingen te vrijwaren.[19]

In de bewijsvoering werd een groot belang gehecht aan verklaringen van getuigen. In de zaak Coppieters kwamen voor de eisende partij onder meer buren aan het woord, huisbazen van Blomme toen ze in Gent verbleef, de vroedvrouw die haar kind ter wereld zette en zelfs de kopiisten van Coppieters' dreigbrieven. Coppieters liet herbergiers, huisbazen van Blomme in Gent en mensen die beweerden met haar geslapen te hebben aan het woord. Daarnaast kregen de getuigenissen van Blomme en haar moeder, en de ondervraging van Coppieters een prominente rol. Getuigen moesten onder eed verklaren dat ze de waarheid spraken, maar de aangeklaagde partij, Coppieters in dit geval, moest dat niet: de vrees bestond dat dit tot te veel meineed zou leiden. De schepenen gingen er dus vanuit dat beschuldigden ongeacht de mogelijke gevolgen zouden liegen als dat beter was voor hun zaak.[20]

Binnen die procedure gebruikten beide partijen allerlei tactieken om

15 *OSAK* 8055: Getuigenis Marie Blomme.
16 *OSAK* 9952: Preparatoire ondervraging Joseph Coppieters.
17 *OSAK* 7749: Ondervraging Joseph Coppieters.
18 Monballyu, ‘Het gerecht in de kasselrij Kortrijk’, 74.
19 Ibidem, 656-676.
20 Monballyu, ‘De hoofdlijnen van de criminele strafprocedure’, 85-86.

hun gelijk aan te tonen. In de eerste plaats benadrukten ze steeds te voldoen aan de juridische voorwaarden. Blomme gaf aan dat ze voor het incident met Coppieters maagd ('suijver') was, dat ze door hem verleid was, onder huwelijksbelofte, en dat ze voordien een goede reputatie bezat. Ze kreeg voor haar goed gedrag attestaties van een priester en haar moeder kon grote delen van haar verhaal bevestigen. Coppieters trachtte de schepenen er van zijn kant van te overtuigen dat Blomme onmogelijk zeker kon zijn van zijn vaderschap, aangezien ze een hoer was. Hij zorgde voor attestaties van haar slecht gedrag en wist getuigen aan te brengen die vertelden dat ze met haar geslapen hadden. Bovendien, zo beweerde hij, had hij haar helemaal niet verleid, maar had zij zich aan hem aangeboden, en had hij haar uit goedheid bij zich genomen.

Blomme en Coppieters trachtten niet alleen materiële bewijzen te leveren. Ze speelden ook allebei in op heersende vooroordelen, bekende narratieven die hun verhaal geloofwaardig maakten. Blomme werd opgevoerd als een geldzuchtige hoer, Coppieters verscheen als een vrekkige, sluwe pervert. Daar bleef het echter niet bij: er was ook sprake van valse getuigenissen en attestaties, intimidatie en omkoping. Zo getuigde een huisbaas van Blomme in Gent dat Coppieters hem gevraagd had om een getuigenis te ondertekenen dat Blomme een hoer was en van hem gestolen had. Coppieters toonde zich zelfs bereid om daarvoor te betalen.[21]

Het meest extreme voorbeeld van de hevigheid waarmee de juridische strijd gevoerd werd, was het incident met Petrus Nollet, een klerk van Coppieters. Aanvankelijk ondertekende hij een verklaring waarin hij aangaf dat hij met Blomme, een notoire hoer, geslapen had.[22] Korte tijd later volgde echter een nieuwe attestatie, waarin hij stelde dat hij niet met Blomme had geslapen, maar dat Coppieters hem 'door dranck, veel belooften ende gelt' overtuigd had om dat te verklaren.[23] In een volgende ronde van de bewijsvoering kwam er weer een nieuwe attestatie, waarin hij beweerde dat hij toch met Blomme geslapen had en dat zijn vorige attestatie gegeven was nadat Blomme en haar moeder hem dronken gevoerd hadden.[24]

Zo was er een spel van woord en wederwoord tot de schepenen het definitieve juridische oordeel vaststelden. Dat gebeurde op 7 juli 1729, toen Coppieters veroordeeld werd tot de betaling van 10 ponden groten en van 6 stuivers per dag alimentatie, te rekenen vanaf de dag van de geboorte. Ook de

21 *OSAK* 8055: Getuigenis Jan Roelant.
22 *OSAK* 11938: Attestatie Petrus Nollet, 17/9/1727.
23 *OSAK* 8055: Brief Petrus Nollet, 11/7/1728.
24 *OSAK* 9507: Posities voor Marie Blomme.

proceskosten - die, gezien de lengte van het proces, hoog opliepen - waren voor zijn rekening. Zijn eigen aanklacht wegens eerroof werd ongegrond verklaard.[25] In het vonnis werd, zoals gebruikelijk, echter geen enkele uitspraak over de feiten gedaan: het ging louter om een praktische oplossing van het conflict. De eis werd gegrond verklaard, een vonnis werd geveld. De waarheid was in de rechtbank een middel om een conflict te beslechten, niet het doel op zich.[26]

Dat zorgde ervoor dat de waarheidsstatus van het juridisch oordeel ambigu was. Beide partijen werden geacht er alles aan te doen om er zelf zo voordelig mogelijk van af te komen, zelfs door de waarheid te verdraaien, maar de rechters moesten, net als rechters vandaag, die leugens met behulp van een strakke procedure ontmaskeren. De waarheid die ze trachten te bereiken, was echter een utilitaire waarheid. Een conflict moest worden beslecht, er werd niet gezocht naar de 'volledige' waarheid.[27] Ook dat is vandaag, zeker bij een burgerlijk proces, nog deels het geval. Het zou vandaag echter ondenkbaar zijn dat bij een voorval als dit geen strafproces volgde, waarbij een volledige waarheid wél het doel is. Dat gebeurde in deze casus niet. De uiteindelijke status van deze juridische waarheid als waarheid bleef daardoor enigszins beperkt.

De reputatie

'Eere ende reputatie', dat zou Blomme verliezen, zo dreigde de anonymus, wellicht Coppieters zelf, in de brief die ik aan het begin van dit artikel aanhaalde. Die eer, die reputatie, was het middel waarmee mensen een oordeel velden over een persoon. Er bestond immers, zo toont ook dit voorbeeld, een binaire erecode: iemand was 'eervol' of 'oneervol', iemand kon eer 'bezitten', maar ook weer 'verliezen'.[28] Maar reputatie was ook meer dan een binaire code. Een individu kon een reputatie hebben die niet alleen 'goed' of 'slecht' was, maar ook een reputatie van onzedigheid, van geloofwaardigheid of van rijkdom.[29]

Bekendstaan als eervol of oneervol had een enorme impact. Wie geen eer had, wie een slechte reputatie bezat, werd gemeden en uitgesloten uit

25 *OSAK* 53: Vonnis 7/7/1729.
26 Vonnissen werden dus niet gemotiveerd: Monballyu, 'Het gerecht in de kasselrij Kortrijk', 678-679.
27 Vgl. Oldham, 'Truth-Telling'.
28 Dinges, *Der Maurermeister*, 25-26; Schwerhoff, 'Early Modern Violence', 31-32.
29 Voorbeelden van dossiers waarin de term 'reputatie' in niet-binaire zin gebruikt werd zijn *OSAK* 14296 (reputatie van beurzensnijder); *OSAK* 3842/2 f 81 (reputatie van een vechtersbaas); *OSAK* 3842/2 f 56 (reputatie van een hoer).

sociabiliteitsnetwerken. Eerlozen hadden dan ook moeilijk toegang tot werk en kregen zelden steun bij conflicten of in moeilijke tijden. Ze werden als onbetrouwbaar en ongeloofwaardig beschouwd.[30] Ook in de rechtbank was reputatie belangrijk: ze beïnvloedde getuigen en rechters en bepaalde de geloofwaardigheid van een getuigenis. Reputaties werden immers heel vaak expliciet aangehaald in processen.[31] Tot slot speelde ook een geïnternaliseerd eer- en schaamtegevoel een niet te verwaarlozen rol bij het belang dat aan eer gehecht werd: mensen vonden het belangrijk om 'eervol' te zijn en voelden schaamte wanneer dat niet het geval was.

Anders dan het juridische oordeel kende het oordeel dat via reputaties geveld werd een minder duidelijke 'procedure'. Reputaties werden gecreëerd in een samenspel van onderhandelingen en interacties.[32] Een individu maakte een aanspraak op een bepaalde reputatie door zich op een bepaalde manier te kleden, zich op een bepaalde manier te gedragen en op een bepaalde manier te spreken. Coppieters, bijvoorbeeld, deed zich steeds voor als een respectabel man en Blomme als een devote maagd. Toen Blomme voor het eerst bij hem kwam wonen, vroeg Coppieters haar (volgens Blommes getuigenis) om zich te kleden als een geestelijke dochter. Hij had immers, zo verklaarde hij haar, een voorbeeldfunctie in Kortrijk, en als ze zich niet als geestelijke dochter zou kleden, 'de menschen lichtelijck souden iet segghen het welcke inder daet niet en soude sijn'.[33] Coppieters dacht duidelijk na over hoe de zaken er zouden uitzien, over wat de impact van handelingen en voorkomen op reputatie waren. Tegelijk bevestigde deze bezorgdheid het belang dat hij aan een goede reputatie hechtte.

Aanspraken op een bepaalde reputatie werden echter niet zomaar aanvaard. Ze konden door het publiek bevestigd of gecontesteerd worden. Het meest in het oog springend waren de beledigingen, die in het publiek de eer van een persoon frontaal aanvielen.[34] Maar het aantasten van eer kon ook heimelijker gebeuren, via geroddel bijvoorbeeld.[35] Ik schreef eerder al dat Blomme van Coppieters een document moest ondertekenen waarin ze verklaarde dat Coppieters niet de vader van haar kind was. Letterlijk stond er dat 'de

30 Van de Pol, 'Prostitutie en de Amsterdamse burgerij', 180-181.
31 Bv. in dossiers als *OSAK* 6670; *OSAK* 14136; *OSAK* 14294; *OSAK* 14296.
32 Vgl. De Waardt, 'De geschiedenis van de eer', 337.
33 *OSAK* 8055: Getuigenis Marie Blomme.
34 Over belediging in de achttiende eeuw verschenen tal van studies: Garrioch, 'Verbal Insults'; Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*; Shoemaker, 'The Decline of Public Insult'. In het Nederlandse taalgebied verscheen o.a. een themanummer van het *Volkskundig Bulletin* in 1993 en Broers, *Beledigingszaken*.
35 Over geroddel verschenen de afgelopen jaren enkele interessante studies: o.a. Wickham, 'Gossip and Resistance'; Horodowich, 'The Gossiping Tongue'; Cowan, 'Gossip and Street Culture'. Zie specifiek met betrekking tot Kortrijk: Hofman, 'An obligation of conscience'.

menschen seijden dat sij van hem coppieters bevrucht was, maer dat sij met hem niet te doen en hadde gehadt'. Het publiek, 'de menschen', trachtte kennelijk via roddels Coppieters aanspraak op een eerbare reputatie teniet te doen. Coppieters trachtte op zijn beurt met dit document te kunnen bewijzen dat die roddels vals waren.

Ook Coppieters zelf maakte grif gebruik van de mogelijkheid om Blommes goede reputatie te contesteren: zoals al in de dreigbrief aangekondigd werd, stond het hem tot doel haar reputatie en eer geheel te vernietigen en ervoor te zorgen dat ze doorging voor hoer en leugenaar. Zo lasterde hij bij haar huisbazen en herbergiers dat Blomme en haar moeder 'quaed volk' waren.[36] Hij ging echter nog veel verder. Op de Grote Markt in Kortrijk werden, wellicht op zijn initiatief, drie poppen opgehangen die geestelijke dochters moesten voorstellen, met een bijschrift: 'Aensiet dit vuyl vel, 't gelijckt Coppieters hoere wel'.[37]

Reputaties moesten onderhandeld worden. Coppieters' lastercampagne betekende dan ook niet dat Blommes reputatie meteen vernietigd was. Toen Nollet bijvoorbeeld opnieuw in de herberg kwam waar hij volgens zijn bewering Blomme 'vleselijk bekend' had, kreeg hij het aan de stok met de waard en de waardin van die herberg. Zij meenden immers gezien te hebben dat hij en Blomme nooit alleen geweest waren en dat ze dus ook geen seks konden hebben gehad. Ook andere klanten van de herberg steunden Blomme. Nollet kreeg geen drank meer en werd de herberg uitgejaagd.[38] De contestatie van Blommes eer werd dus niet zonder meer aanvaard, maar werd door de eigen waarneming ontkracht. Reputaties kwamen zo slechts tot stand door een samenspel van interacties, die mensen moesten toelaten een oordeel te vormen of een individu eervol was of niet.

Het blijft de vraag in welke mate iemands reputatie als 'waar', overeenkomstig met *wat de dingen waren*, beschouwd werd. Het performatieve karakter van eer is in eerder onderzoek al vaak benadrukt: de uitingen zelf, de publieke opvoeringen en contestaties, waren van belang.[39] Niet reageren op een publieke belediging, of die nu waar of vals was, leidde tot eerverlies. Dat

36 *OSAK* 8055: Getuigenis Jan Roelant; Getuigenis Judocus Bultinck.

37 *OSAK* 9507. Hoewel het niet zeker is dat Coppieters de poppen liet plaatsen, ligt het wel in lijn met zijn pogingen om haar als hoer te bestempelen en zwart te maken. Als man was dit bovendien geen al te grote beschadiging van zijn eigen reputatie. Als de poppen door iemand anders zouden opgesteld zijn, zou dat erop wijzen dat zijn lastercampagne wel degelijk effect oogstte.

38 *OSAK* 8055: Getuigenis Guillaume Coppelen; Getuigenis Marie Boon; Getuigenis Martinus Terskij.

39 De term 'performativiteit' wordt daarbij weliswaar niet vaak gebruikt, maar het idee dat eer vooral een publieke opvoering is, komt wel sterk naar voren bij bv. De Waardt, 'Naar een geschiedenis van de eer'. 10; Dinges, *Der Maurermeister*, 25. Vgl. Burke, 'Performing History', 40.

blijkt ook in deze casus: de poppen op de markt, bijvoorbeeld, wilden niet zozeer *aantonen* dat Blomme oneerlijk was, maar waren een *performance* van die oneer.

Toch werden reputaties niet alleen als performatief gezien. Joannes Verslype (1656-1735), die tot 1715 in Kortrijk priester was, had het in zijn achttiendelige verzameling preken onder meer over roddels. Roddelen was een grote zonde, omdat mensen daarmee de reputatie van hun medemens schaadden. ‘Gelijk de Wet Godts verbiedt te liegen, en de waerheyt te kort te doen, soo verbiedt sy oock een anders eere te quetsen’.[40] Bovendien waren roddels vaak onjuist: ‘Van hooren seggen liegt men veel’ was niet voor niets een populair gezegde.[41] Maar zelfs als iets waar was, dan mocht dat volgens hem niet de eerste bezorgdheid zijn. ‘'t is waer, seggen se, waerom en soude men't niet mogen seggen? Wilt ghy weten waerom? Om dat het achterklap is, strijdende tegen de liefde, en dickwils tegen de rechtveirdigheyt’.[42] Liefde en rechtvaardigheid stonden hier dus boven de waarheid. Tegelijk impliceert Verslype wel dat het waarheidsgehalte van reputaties door velen wél belangrijk geacht werd. Dat blijkt in de casus Coppieters ook uit de pogingen die Coppieters deed om roddels over zijn affaire te ontkrachten met een geschreven verklaring en uit de reactie van de herbergiers, die zich tegen Nollets onterende praat verzetten. Mensen zochten wel degelijk naar de ‘echte waarheid’ achter de performances. Ze trachtten zich ervan te verzekeren dat reputaties overeenkwamen met de werkelijkheid.

De biecht

De bekentenis, schreef Michel Foucault in 1976 in zijn *Histoire de la sexualité*, is sinds de middeleeuwen een van de belangrijkste rituelen waarmee in de westerse wereld waarheid geproduceerd wordt. De katholieke biecht is volgens hem het prototype van een bekentenis als weg naar waarheid.[43] Het katholicisme legde elke persoon de plicht op om via de biecht te weten te komen wie hij of zij was, na te gaan wat er in hem of haar gebeurde, fouten en verlangens te erkennen en die aan iemand anders te openbaren.[44] Ook vanuit kerkhistorische optiek is de biecht onderzocht als een ‘formidable contribution

40 Verslype, *Historie en overeenkominge*, 1, 2, 371.
41 Ibidem, 374.
42 Ibidem, 370.
43 Foucault, *De wil tot weten*, 60-62.
44 Martin, Gutman en Hutton (eds.), *Technologies of the Self*, 40. Zie voor een samenvatting van de voornaamste kritieken op Foucaults theorie Hartman, ‘Confession as Cultural Form’, 537-538.

HISTORIE
EN
OVER-EEN-KOMINGE
DER
VIER EVANGELIEN,
OFTE
Het slot van de Pelgrimagie van Jesus Christus,
Beſtaende in 181. *Sermoenen.*
Hier is bygevoegt de uytlegginge van de
THIEN GEBODEN GODTS,
In 80. Sermoenen;
Mitsgaders eene toe-eygeninge van de Sermoenen op alle de Sondaegen en voornaemſte Feeſt-daegen des jaers, als oock verſcheyde materien, om te Predicken gheheele Adventen, Vaſtens en Feſtaven van het H. Sacrament des Autaers, met eene algemeene tafel der merckelyckſte ſaecken in dit zeheel werck behandelt, beſtaende in 600. *Sermoenen.*
GEPREDICKT
Door Heer end[illegible] 'r JOANN[illegible] VERSLYPE,
Arch[illegible] [illegible]egge.
V[illegible] M.
Tot GHENDT, by *Franciſcus* en *Do[illegible]nicus vander Woen*, woonende in de Velt-ſtr[illegible]ete in den gulden Bybel.
Met Approbatie.

Afb. 2. Titelpagina van de *Historie en overeenkominge der vier evangelien* van Joannes Verslype,waarin hij onder meer zijn indeeën over reputatie en de biecht uiteenzet.

à la connaissance de soi'.[45] De meeste studies baseren zich daarbij vooral op normatieve bronnen. Het is daarom interessant te onderzoeken wat de status van biecht als waarheidsinstrument was in de praktijk: hechtten mensen inderdaad zo'n groot belang aan die private bekentenis? Werden innerlijke verlangens opgebiecht?

Ik keer eerst kort terug naar de katholieke visie op waarheidsproductie. Die kwam al aan bod toen ik Joannes Verslype hierboven citeerde: 'de Wet Godts verbiedt te liegen, en de waerheyt te kort te doen'.[46] Ferdinand Loys, geboren in 1668 en in de late zeventiende eeuw prior van een klooster in Frans-Vlaanderen, publiceerde met *Den nieuwe spiegel der jongheyt, of gulden A.B.C.* een schoolboekje op rijm dat in Vlaanderen de hele achttiende eeuw erg populair bleef.[47] Daarin had ook hij het over leugens: 'Kind, het word ons klaer beschreven // Dat men niet om iemands leven // En mag liegen: nog uyt nood // Het zy leugens kleyn of groot.// Alle leugenen zyn zonden // Hoe kleyn dat zy zyn bezonden'.[48] Liegen mocht volgens katholieke moralisten onder geen beding. Zoals daarnet bleek, was het echter ook niet toegelaten om altijd de waarheid te spreken. Sommige zaken, die de eer van anderen schonden, moesten verzwegen worden. Het verbod op liegen hield geen gebod tot waarheid spreken in.

Op een bepaald moment moest echter wel de volledige waarheid verteld worden, en dat was op het moment van de biecht. Verslype had het er ook over in zijn sermoenen. Biechten, legde hij uit, was het bekennen van zonden aan een priester, zodat de biechteling vergiffenis zou kunnen krijgen voor die zonden. Ze had bovendien een preventief effect, 'want hoe veel sonden en wordender niet gelaten uyt vreese dat sy souden moeten gebiecht worden?'[49] De biecht, zo concludeerde Verslype, was dan ook een uiterst noodzakelijk sacrament.

Om succesvol te zijn, moest biechteling zichzelf vooraf aan een zelfonderzoek onderwerpen en 'alle de hoecken van syn conscientie doorsoecken'. Alle zonden moesten vervolgens tijdens de biecht opgenoemd worden, niet alleen in het algemeen, maar zo gedetailleerd mogelijk. Daarbij moesten ook de omstandigheden beschreven worden: in welke hoedanigheid, hoe, met welke middelen, tegen wie, waar, wanneer en waarom was de zonde bedreven? Heel terloops meldde hij ook dat zelfs zonden die alleen gedacht

45 Delumeau, *L'aveu et le pardon*. 7.
46 Verslype, *Historie en overeenkominge* 1, 2, 371.
47 Vieu-Kuik en Smeyers, *Geschiedenis van de letterkunde*, 6, 443.
48 Loys, *Den nieuwen spiegel der jongheyd*, 54.
49 Verslype, *Historie en overeenkominge* 3, 1, 245.

('bedreven met de gepeysen') waren opgebiecht moesten worden, maar daar ging hij niet dieper op in.[50]

Het sacrament van de biecht, zo betoogde Verslype verder, was als een soort rechtbank, waarbij de misdadiger zichzelf beschuldigde en de priester als rechter het vonnis velde. Er was echter een belangrijk verschil tussen de religieuze rechtbank en de wereldlijke. Bij die laatste gold immers het motto 'die kent, die hangt': wie misdaden bekende, werd bestraft en degenen die hun misdaden met succes loochenden, gingen vrijuit. 'Maer in dese vierschaere Godts, die syn sonden rechtsinnig belydt, die wort ontslagen: en den genen, die se loochent of bedeckt, die wort verwesen'.[51] Liegen in de rechtbank kon in iemands voordeel zijn, wie echter in de biecht loog, werd door God veroordeeld. Verslype plaatste de waarheid van de biecht dus boven die van de rechtbank.

Het is duidelijk dat bij de biecht niet alleen niet gelogen mocht worden, maar dat er helemaal niets verzwegen mocht worden. Verslype benadrukte keer op keer dat alle zonden exhaustief en gedetailleerd opgebiecht moesten worden. De biecht was zo een middel om een nieuwe, private waarheid over zichzelf te vormen. Dat schreef hij zelfs heel expliciet: de biecht diende immers niet enkel om vergiffenis te krijgen, maar ook om 'ons te brengen tot beter kennisse van ons selven'. De biecht leidde tot zelfkennis.[52]

Hooggestemde idealen, maar wat betekenden die voor de biechtpraktijk? In de casus Coppieters kwam de biecht verschillende keren ter sprake. Blomme verklaarde dat Coppieters haar, in zijn niet aflatende ijver om hun betrekkingen geheim te houden, vroeg om niet meer te biecht te gaan, 'anders dat den biechtvaeder haer soude doen beloven van bij hem niet meer te slaepen'. Hij had zelf immers ook 'al dien tijdt niet ghebiecht', door, zo bleek later, met Pasen steeds buiten de stad te verblijven. Blomme beweerde nog dat ze liever niet meer bij hem zou slapen dan niet meer te biechten, maar daar had hij geen oren naar.[53]

Liegen in de biecht werd onmogelijk geacht en het niet navolgen van een opdracht van een priester evenzeer. Hoewel de biecht een veel hogere status genoot dan vandaag, was het ontwijken van de biecht voor Coppieters blijkbaar niet problematisch. Blomme daarentegen vond het moeilijker om niet te biechten. Op een gegeven zondag was ze, nog steeds volgens haar eigen

50 Ibidem, 255-257, 275-288.
51 Ibidem, 261-262. 'Verwesen' betekent hier 'veroordeeld'
52 Ibidem, 245.
53 *OSAK* 8055: Getuigenis Marie Blomme.

verklaring, in de buurt van een kerk en ‘sin hebbende om te biechten’ zag ze haar kans schoon om daar naar de mis te gaan. Haar poging om na de mis te biecht te gaan werd echter verijdeld door haar voorgangster als gouvernante (en minnares) van Coppieters, die haar beval aanstonds naar huis te gaan: ‘Ghij vervloeckte hoere, ghij slaept alle nachte bij mijnen man [...], wat gaet ghij inde kercke doen, wilt ghij misschien biechten, ick en hebbe noijt ghebiecht soo langhe ick daer gewoont hebbe en ghij en suit oock niet moghen doen’.[54]

De waarheid van de biecht had, zowel in de normatieve uiteenzettingen van priesters als in de praktische bekommernissen van burgers, een hoge status. In de biecht kon niet gelogen worden en aan het gezag van de priester werd niet getornd. Wel kon de productie van waarheid door middel van de biecht omzeild worden. Sommigen, zoals Blomme, bleken echter juist een behoefte te hebben aan deze vorm van waarheidsproductie. Dat kunnen we misschien interpreteren, in lijn met de these van Michel Foucault, als een teken van de opkomst van het subject. Blomme gaf immers nooit aan dat ze wilde biechten uit godsvrees of uit externe dwang, maar wel dat ze ‘sin’ had om te biechten. Hier was sprake van individuele nood, van een behoefte aan het bekennen van een ‘ware ik’, van productie van subjectiviteit en van een zoektocht naar vergiffenis daarvoor.

Reflectie

In *The Making of Modern Self* beargumenteerde Dror Wahrman dat er in de vroege achttiende eeuw niet zoiets bestond als een ‘innerlijk zelf’. De premoderne mens miste een stabiele, innerlijke kern van individualiteit. Identiteiten waren voor 1780 kneedbaar en werden gezien als potentieel veranderlijk. Maskerades, bijvoorbeeld, kenden een populariteit die aan het eind van de eeuw erg plots zou verdwijnen en de lange traditie van vrouwen die zich als mannen verkleedden om aan werk te raken kende rond 1800 eveneens een einde. Bovendien richtten mensen zich niet zozeer op zichzelf, deden ze niet zozeer aan innerlijke reflectie, maar richtten ze zich vooral naar de buitenwereld, naar hun sociale omgeving.[55] Zijn interpretatie sluit aan bij het idee dat de publieke schaamtecultuur van de nieuwe tijd in de negentiende eeuw plaatsmaakte voor een schuldenhuur die meer op innerlijke reflectie gestoeld zou zijn.[56]

54 Ibidem.

55 Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self*, 168.

56 Van de Pol, ‘Prostitutie en de Amsterdamse burgerij’, 179-180. Vgl. ook met Spierenburgs ideeën over de ‘spiritualization of honour’: Spierenburg, *A History of Murder*, 9-10. Zie voor kritische bedenkingen bij de concepten schaamte- en schuldcultuur Nash en Kilday, *Cultures of Shame*, 3-6.

Wahrmans theorie kende veel succes. Kritische bedenkingen bleven echter niet uit. Vooral zijn stelling dat rond 1780 vrij plots een modern identiteitsregime begon, dat aan individuen een stabiele kern, innerlijke dieptes en grotere uniciteit toekende, kon op scepsis rekenen.[57] In de Lage Landen werden ook kanttekeningen geplaatst bij het gebrek aan een 'waar zelf' dat de vroege achttiende eeuw zou kenmerken. Eveline Koolhaas-Grosfeld toonde immers aan dat in gedragsvoorschriften wel degelijk grote aandacht was voor het ware zelf: de verplichting om het persoonlijke leven te verbergen, om zich te gedragen volgens allerlei rituele voorschriften en zo het ware zelf verborgen te houden, vereiste een grote mate van introspectie.[58] Volgens haar analyse zou er dus wel sprake zijn van zelfreflectie, maar leidde die nog niet tot een behoefte aan 'authenticiteit', tot het laten samenvallen van het publieke imago met het eigen zelfbeeld.

In de casus Coppieters blijven aanwijzingen voor praktijken van zelfreflectie, in lijn met wat Wahrmans theorie suggereert, beperkt. Dat is uiteraard voor een deel eigen aan de juridische bron, waarbij innerlijke motivaties in principe van geen tel waren. Maar helemaal afwezig waren ze niet. Blomme getuigde immers dat Coppieters op een gegeven moment wroeging toonde. Ze zei dat hij, terwijl ze nog bij hem verbleef,

> somwijlen aen taefel sittende fixelijck was besiende ende alsoo de deposante vraeghde waerom hij haer soo aensagh, heeft hij geantwoordt dat het was om dat hij haer soo onnoosel gevonden hadde den eersten nacht dat hij haer gebruyckt hadde, oock somwijlen segghende dat het hem seer pijnelijck was dat hij haer suijver hadde gevonden, dat hij liever soude gehadt hebben dat sij een hoerken hadde geweest.[59]

Coppieters gaf aan spijt te hebben dat hij Blomme haar maagdelijkheid ontnomen had. Dat viel hem 'seer pijnelijck' en uitte zich in het vast voor zich uit staren.

Met zijn bekentenis aan Blomme maakte Coppieters duidelijk dat hij wel degelijk nadacht over zijn daden. Bovendien vond Blomme het uiten daarvan relevant genoeg om in haar getuigenis aan te halen. Dat duidt erop dat aan die morele zelfreflectie belang werd gehecht. Tegelijk toont deze zaak ook dat de impact van die reflectie beperkt bleef. Ondanks zijn bewustzijn van zijn morele

57 Berger, Campbell en Herzog, 'Forum',
58 Koolhaas-Grosfeld, 'Behind the Mask of Civility', 262; Van der Haven en Koolhaas-Grosfeld, 'Maskerade en ontmaskering', 11.
59 *OSAK* 8055: Getuigenis Marie Blomme.

wandaden, zette Coppieters zijn machinaties om zijn reputatie te beschermen, zijn gelijk te halen voor de rechtbank en de biecht te vermijden onverminderd door. Dat hij Blomme daarvoor door het slijk moest halen hield hem kennelijk niet tegen. Nergens in het hele dossier was er iemand die aangaf dat dit abnormaal was. Dat is een cruciaal verschilpunt met de moderne omgang met innerlijke reflectie, die de basis moet vormen van iemands handelen. Wanneer dat niet het geval is, volgt morele veroordeling. Die was hier nergens te bespeuren. Ook al moeten deze observaties door de beperkingen die eigen zijn aan historische bronnen tot op zekere hoogte speculatief blijven, het feit dat het zinvol geacht werd om aan te halen dat Coppieters wroeging had, maar niet om te expliciteren dat het schandalig was dat hij ondanks zijn schuldbesef zijn machinaties verderzette, is opvallend. Leven zonder hypocrisie was niet aan de orde.

Conclusies

De achttiende-eeuwse bekommernis om leugens en bedrog was groot. Tijdgenoten zagen overal om zich heen hypocrisie en valsheid, maar trachtten door alle leugens heen toch de waarheid te vinden. Die waarheid werd via verschillende wegen gezocht. Elk van die wegen had een eigen methode, een eigen focus en een eigen status. In de casus Coppieters kwamen vier vormen van waarheidsproductie naar voren. Het duidelijkst aanwezig was de waarheid van de rechtbank. Die waarheid had vooral conflictbeslechting tot doel en legde de nadruk op juridisch relevante feiten. Dat was heel anders bij de waarheid die via reputaties tot stand kwam. Iemands reputatie moest vooral aangeven of de persoon in kwestie ‘eervol’ dan wel ‘oneervol’ was. Die eer werd gedeeltelijk aanvaard als een performance, de publieke verdediging van eer, maar er werd tegelijk naar gestreefd dat iemands reputatie zijn of haar ware aard weerspiegelde.

De waarheden van recht en reputatie waren publieke waarheden. Ook in het meer private domein werd echter naar waarheid gezocht. De biecht was het moment bij uitstek waarop verborgen zonden onder woorden gebracht konden worden. Ze had een erg hoge waarheidsstatus - liegen werd onmogelijk geacht - maar kon, door wie de nodige moeite deed, wel ontweken worden. Het was een waarheid die niet *moest* geproduceerd worden. Een private waarheid kon echter ook via zelfreflectie ontstaan. Mensen dachten na over hun handelingen en velden daar een moreel oordeel over. Het resultaat van die zelfreflectie was echter, althans in deze casus, niet bepalend voor hoe mensen zich verder

gedroegen.

Verschillende vormen van waarheidsproductie leidden tot verschillende waarheden. Ik wil afsluiten met een opener naar verder onderzoek: een belangrijke vraag is of ‘authenticiteit’, het streven naar het laten samenvallen van de waarheid van zelfreflectie met die van de biecht, de reputatie en het recht, van belang was. De hier onderzochte casus laat zien dat hoewel elke waarheid een eigen status had, er geen enkele was die als de énige waarheid beschouwd werd. Coppieters' schuldbesef had geen impact op zijn uitgebreide machinaties om zijn reputatie te bewaren en zijn proces te winnen; zijn bezorgdheid om zijn reputatie weerhield hem er niet van getuigen om te kopen of te bedreigen. Niemand maakte hier een probleem van, het is zelfs alsof dat de verwachting was. Het lijkt er dan ook op dat het streven naar het samenvallen van de verschillende ‘waarheden’, het streven naar ‘authenticiteit’, dat in de latere achttiende eeuw zo centraal kwam te staan, in deze vroeg-achttiende-eeuwse context nog geen ingang had gevonden. Vergelijking met andere casussen en andere contexten zal meer licht op deze kwestie kunnen schijnen.

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Boekrecensie van Rienk Vermij, *De geest uit de fles. De Verlichting en het verval van de confessionele samenleving*, Amsterdam: Nieuwezijds, 2014. 324 pagina's, ISBN 978-90-5712-397-9.

Er bestaan al heel wat overzichtswerken van de Verlichting. James van Horn Melton, Dorinda Outram, Roy Porter en vele anderen hebben pogingen gewaagd de Verlichting te duiden. Hoewel zij het er over eens zijn dat de Verlichting niet slechts uit Parijse *philosophes* bestaat, houden zij er allemaal een eigen interpretatie op na, zodat de lezer de laatste vijftien jaar een internationale explosie van nieuwe varianten van de Verlichting voorgeschoteld kreeg: radicaal, gematigd, piëtistisch of katholiek. Dan Edelstein sprak zelfs van een Super Enlightenment.

Met zijn nieuwste werk voegt Rienk Vermij een eigenzinnig nieuw perspectief toe aan de al bestaande. Zoals de ondertitel aangeeft bestudeert hij de Verlichting in relatie tot een historisch proces dat beschreven kan worden als het verval van de confessionele, absolutistische samenleving. Terwijl de historische context normaal gesproken diende om de Verlichting beter te begrijpen als eigenstandig corpus van ideeën, laat Vermij zien dat deze beweging eerder onderdeel was van een groter veranderingsproces en dit proces niet aanstuurde. Verlichte ideeën over tolerantie en kritiek op kerkelijke machtsaanspraken waren niet zozeer nieuw, maar reacties op, verklaringen van en pogingen ter legitimering of aanmoediging van processen die al in gang waren gezet. Het contrast met eerdere overzichten, waarin werd gehamerd op de transformatieve kracht van Verlichtingsideeën, kan niet groter zijn.

Vermij zet zijn verhaal uiteen in elf hoofdstukken. Hij betoogt dat de ideeën van de Verlichting niet in de achttiende eeuw ontstonden, maar ten tijde van de Reformatie en de confessionalisering in de zestiende en zeventiende eeuw. Toen ontstond een verbintenis tussen kerk en absolutistische staat met als gezamenlijk doel het beschermen van een morele gemeenschap. Die was gebaseerd op een gedeeld confessioneel waardenpatroon dat met harde hand werd afgedwongen. De hierdoor ontstane fricties leidden al in de zestiende en zeventiende eeuw tot kritische geluiden, die zich niet beperkten tot kritiek op kerkelijke macht en intolerantie, maar ook het belang onderstreepten van bovenconfessionele disciplines zoals het natuurrecht. Ontwikkelingen in de

wetenschap brachten bovendien een denkwijze die was gebaseerd op universele wiskunde en de algemeen geldige logica van het experiment. De alliantie tussen kerk en staat bleek echter instabiel. Het bestrijden van religieuze minderheden leidde tot te veel geweld, en het ideaal van een morele gemeenschap bleek utopisch. De staat zette zich daarom steeds meer in om potentieel explosieve religieuze geschillen en kerkelijke machtsaanspraken te beperken.

Tijdens de crisis van het Europese bewustzijn tussen 1680 en 1715 vermengden deze ontwikkelingen zich met een uitbreiding van het intellectuele verkeer en een verbreding van de republiek der letteren. Er ontstond een nieuwe seculiere cultuur, gestoeld op wat Vermij de 'nieuwe lekenfilosofie' noemt. Deze bestond vooral uit een zoektocht naar aards geluk, met behulp van praktische levenswijsheden en de nieuwste wetenschappelijke inzichten. De nieuwe lekenfilosofie was echter onderdeel van een veel grotere omslag: het natuurwetenschappelijk denken groeide in deze periode uit tot een nieuw 'symbolisch universum' met een nieuwe taal die dwong tot het herformuleren en legitimeren van oudere ideeën. Omdat tevens het confessionalisme en absolutisme aan betekenis inboetten, moesten vorsten, kerken en andere instituten zichzelf evenzeer opnieuw uitvinden.

Voor het koningschap betekende dit dat het haar sacraliteit definitief verloor. De alliantie met de confessionele kerk werd verbroken en de staat richtte zich op het consolideren van haar macht. Meer en meer werd de staat een seculiere instelling, gericht op het versterken van de welvaart met behulp van een gerationaliseerd ambtenarenapparaat en de wetenschap. In de Duitse landen hechtte een hervormingsgerichte ambtenarenelite steeds meer aan het cameralisme, een interdisciplinaire staatshuishoudkundige wetenschap, die onder andere bestond uit economische en juridische expertise. In Frankrijk ontstond het fysiocratisme, een mengsel van economische en politieke theorie gericht op welvaartsmaximalisatie en het herinrichten van de samenleving in het algemeen. Fysiocraten verwachtten onder andere veel van liberaliserende maatregelen, zoals de afschaffing van allerlei traditionele belastingen en restricties. In de loop van de eeuw kwam tevens een invloedrijke nutsideologie op: door verlichte ideeën gedreven vorsten presenteerden zich steeds vaker als dienaren van de staat, verantwoordelijk voor het welzijn van hun onderdanen.

Dergelijke transformaties hadden ook gevolgen voor kerk en godsdienst. Kerkelijke macht werd ondergeschikt gemaakt aan staatsbelang. Van de clerus werd niet zozeer tucht verwacht, maar dienstbaarheid aan de gemeenschap en het bevorderen van deugd. Het beknotten en omvormen van de kerk werd

vaak aangedreven door politici die in de historiografie worden beschreven als verlichte intellectuelen. Een voorbeeld hiervan was de markies de Pombal, een Portugese staatsman (1699-1782) die omwille van de modernisering van de staat de strijd aanging met de jezuïeten en de adel. Hij richtte zich op het vergroten van de welvaart en het herstel van Lissabon na de aardbeving van 1755.

Ook religieuze tolerantie werd steeds meer onderdeel van *state policy*, niet zozeer uit idealisme als wel uit pragmatisme. Vermij benadrukt dat de staat aan het begin van de achttiende eeuw veel sterker en zelfverzekerder was dan in het confessionele tijdperk daarvoor. Het tolereren van religieuze minderheden werd daardoor beheersbaar en minder beangstigend. 'Filosofische' agendapunten zoals tolerantie en het beperken van kerkelijke macht gingen dus verrassend vaak goed samen met ontwikkelingen die uit staatsbelang voortkwamen. Op dit punt wordt duidelijk wat de kracht is van Vermij's uitnodiging om de Verlichting te zien als onderdeel van een historisch proces tussen kerk en staat. Verlichte denkers schiepen niet de praktijk van tolerantie, maar conceptualiseerden en verdedigden een ontwikkeling die al gaande was.

Daarnaast pleit Vermij voor een onderscheid tussen show- en schaduwzijde van de Verlichting, in plaats van het gebruikelijker onderscheid tussen een atheïstisch-republikeinse Radicale Verlichting en diens gematigde tegenhanger. In feite waren show- en schaduwzijde sterk met elkaar verbonden, soms zelfs in dezelfde persoon. Contact met radicale denkwijzen betekende bovendien niet onmiddellijk revolutionair engagement. Vermij noemt het dubbelspel van Voltaire, die zich aan de ene kant begaf in de hoogste kringen van literair Parijs, maar tegelijkertijd allerlei onderhandse satires en ondeugende geschriften verspreidde. Toch signaleert ook Vermij dat de filosofen steeds meer aan publiek aanzien wonnen. De filosofie die zij propageerden hield allereerst een verandering van stijl en genre in: filosofische ideeën werden niet meer vervat in lange, droge en systematische traktaten, maar in een luchtiger stijl die meer aansloot bij de nieuwe geest van scepsis en gerichtheid op het wereldlijke leven. Genres als de roman en het reisverhaal bleken bij uitstek geschikt voor de nieuwe toon die men wilde zetten. Belangrijk is ook dat de nieuwe 'lekenfilosofie' verschilde van de antieke zoektocht naar wijsheid en de metafysische denkbeelden van de Renaissance, en niet per definitie wetenschappelijk was. Het gedachtengoed van mensen zoals de baron d'Holbach, auteur van radicale materialistische traktaten, ademde weliswaar de taal van de wetenschap, maar was lang niet altijd gebaseerd op

natuurwetenschappelijk onderzoek en verraadde soms ook weinig bezorgdheid om coherentie of accuratesse. Bovendien bleek er ruimte te bestaan voor allerlei vormen van esoterisme. Zo verkondigde Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) op basis van zijn visioenen een leer waarin er geen traditionele hemel of hel was, maar alleen zielen die tot hogere graden van zelfontwikkeling waren gekomen. Vrijmetselaren combineerden de verlichte nadruk op deugd. zelfverheffing en nut met de verering van een architect van het universum en uiteenlopende mystieke denkbeelden.

De Verlichting was dus niet zuiver seculier of wetenschappelijk, noch was het een strijd tussen het licht van de wetenschappelijke rede en het religieuze obscurantisme. Vermij benadrukt dat het de meeste verlichte denkers erom ging het confessionele geweld te bedwingen, de excessen van de kerk te beknotten en elke vorm van dogmatisch gezag in geestelijke zaken af te schaffen. Deze agenda was geenszins incompatibel met het geloof in God of andere transcendente aangelegenheden. Integendeel, veel religieuze denkers namen allerlei onderdelen van de verlichte agenda over. Theologen hielden minder vast aan religieuze leerstellingen en onderschreven principes van tolerantie en lekenfilosofen articuleerden in een groot corpus aan fysico-theologische literatuur een basis voor een niet-confessionele moraal.

Ook was er geen sprake van een algehele religieuze omwenteling. Veel bleef hetzelfde. Hoewel confessionele verschillen in de ogen van de staat minder betekenisvol waren geworden, bleven de oude confessies met hun kerkorganisaties en devotionele praktijken voortbestaan. Wel nieuw waren religieuze stromingen als die van de Hernhutters en de methodisten. Zij zochten naar directe, krachtig gevoelde persoonlijke verhoudingen tot God. Vermij ziet deze fenomenen als uitvloeisels van de veranderende rol van godsdienst in de samenleving: kerken waren hun functie als beschermers van confessionele eenheid verloren en de morele gemeenschap in de samenleving waarop zij stutten was uit elkaar gevallen. Religie werd een persoonlijke overtuiging. Daarmee was de achttiende eeuw niet minder gelovig, maar gelovig op een andere manier.

Op het gebied van kerk, religie, staat en filosofie geeft Vermij dus een aantal interessante correcties. Traditioneler is de manier waarop hij het ontstaan van de publieke ruimte, de genootschapscultuur, de vergroting van het lezerspubliek en de commercialisering van het boekbedrijf in kaart brengt. Deze ontwikkelingen ziet hij als belangrijke factoren in de verspreiding van de hierboven beschreven filosofische denkwijze. Daarnaast gaat Vermij in op de

opkomst van het discours rondom de ‘verlichte burger’, oftewel het individu dat moest worden opgevoed tot een actief, betrouwbaar lid van de maatschappij en dat onder andere via genootschappen zou bijdragen aan de verbetering van die maatschappij. Interessant is echter dat Vermij de opkomende verlichte burgerij niet beschrijft als een groepering die zich bewust afzet tegen de staat of de vorst, zoals de Duitse filosoof Jürgen Habermas. In plaats daarvan ziet Vermij dat de burgerij in hoge mate samenwerkte met de staat om allerlei hervormingen door te voeren. Hoewel patriottisme in Nederland wordt gezien als verzet tegen stadhouder en regenten, verwees deze term elders in Europa bijvoorbeeld naar burgerlijke inzet voor economische welvaart en sociaal welzijn in nauwe samenwerking met de gevestigde orde. Net zoals veel verlichte denkers waren deze patriotse burgers wat de staatsinrichting en bestaande sociale verhoudingen betrof uiterst onrevolutionair.

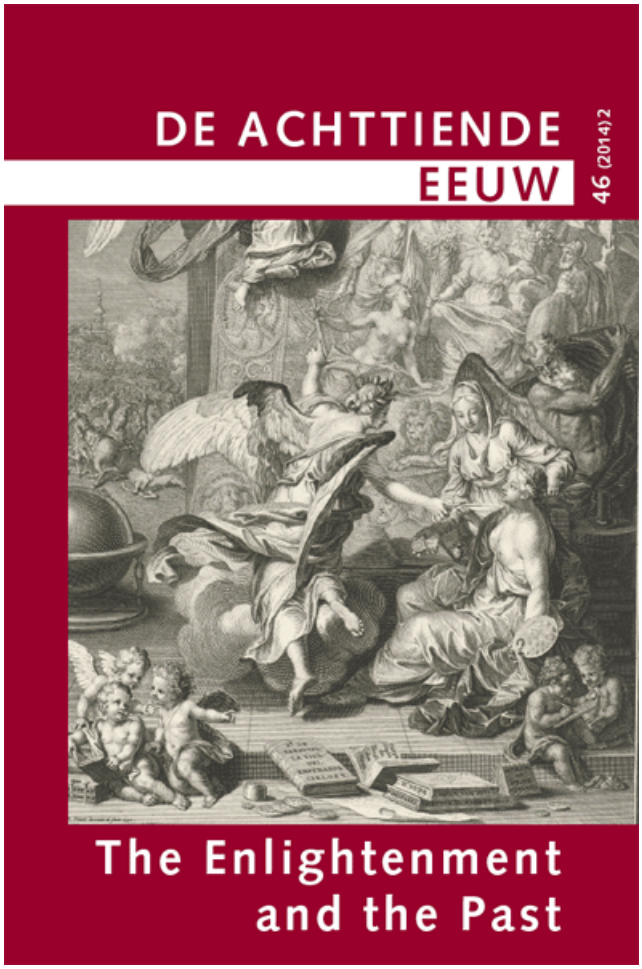
In de laatste twee hoofdstukken maakt Vermij de balans op van de Verlichting, als historisch tijdperk en als tijdloos corpus van ideeën. Die balans blijkt ambigu. Enerzijds had de Verlichting godsdienstige tolerantie, burgerschap, onderwijs en kritisch denken gebracht; anderzijds riepen hervormingsgezinde denkers en ambtenaren grote weerstand op door hun paternalistische pogingen om hardnekkige tradities af te schaffen. Johann Friedrich Struensee (1737-1772), lijfarts van de Deense kroon, werd in 1772 bijvoorbeeld zelfs onthoofd, omdat zijn eigen hervormingsprogramma tot een opstand had geleid. Voorvallen zoals deze laten volgens Vermij zien dat de Verlichting een inherente zwakte heeft: ze kan weinig met lokale behoeften of gevoelens. Ook hebben verlichte denkers zich niet altijd op vruchtbare wijze bezig gehouden met zaken die niet rationeel of objectief zijn. Bovendien sloeg (en slaat) de Verlichting soms om in haar tegendeel: bevrijdende hervormingen leidden tot nieuwe controles, vrijdenkerij verwerd tot progressieve dogmatiek en ook de inclusie van nieuwe groepen kende grenzen. Vermij, die dit alles erkent, ziet hierin echter geen argument om de Verlichting als intellectueel erfgoed te verwerpen. Allereerst omdat dit niet kan: de achttiende eeuw heeft de samenleving immers op onherroepelijke wijze veranderd. Maar ook omdat de Verlichting eerder een denkinstrument was dan een welomschreven ideologie, die daardoor steeds gecorrigeerd en geactualiseerd kan worden.

De geest uit de fles is een welkome bijdrage aan de historiografie over de Verlichting. Vermij past geen nieuwe conceptuele kunstgrepen toe, maar brengt de beeldvorming over dit tijdperk terug naar aardse proporties door de Verlichting te zien als onderdeel van een veel bredere historische context.

De Verlichting is niet zonder meer radicaal, gematigd, seculier of religieus te noemen, en als corpus van ideeën was het niet eens de meest krachtige factor voor de historische ontwikkelingen van de achttiende eeuw. De kern van dat tijdperk was juist het uiteenvallen van het confessionele, absolutistische model, een proces dat voor een belangrijk deel gedreven werd door structurele veranderingen in de verhouding tussen kerk, staat en samenleving. Het beeld van een handjevol heroïsche filosofen dat strijdt tegen de infame dogmatiek van de kerk moet daarom aan de kant worden geschoven. Vermij biedt kortom een *reset* van de Verlichting en schetst een realistisch beeld van de achttiende eeuw.

Zijn boodschap is duidelijk en verfrissend, maar tegelijkertijd nodigt het boek uit tot nieuwe vragen. Vooral de langere lijnen die Vermij uitzet vanaf de zestiende eeuw tot de achttiende zijn interessant. Als de Verlichting niet zozeer bestond uit een ‘revolution of the mind’, maar inderdaad neerkwam op de receptie van een nieuw symbolisch universum, moeten we de plaats van de Verlichting in de intellectuele geschiedschrijving wellicht herzien. Is het nog zinvol om van een eigenstandige Verlichting te spreken, of moeten we een andere periodisering ontwikkelen? Daarnaast zou het interessant kunnen zijn om gedetailleerd in kaart te brengen op welke manier het nieuwe symbolische universum en de nieuwe stijlen van legitimering ontstonden. Zo zijn er nog vele vragen te bedenken. Ondertussen mogen we Vermij's werk begroeten als een uiterst geslaagd overzicht van de achttiende eeuw, en wellicht zelfs als handboek voor het academisch onderwijs.

[2014/2]



Explanation of the frontispiece
Eveline Koolhaas-Grosfeld

Bernard Picart, frontispiece to Frans van Mieris Jr, *History of the Dutch Princes from the Houses of Bavaria, Burgundy and Austria who ruled the Netherlands from the reign of Albert, Count of Holland, to the death of the Emperor Charles V*. The Hague, published by Pieter de Hondt, 1732-1735. Etching and engraving, 34.2 × 22.2 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet (with caption in French).

'HISTORY here hands a pen to PAINTING and urges her to depict the fortunes of the princes that [...] have ruled the Netherlands'. Thus begins the caption (in the Dutch version) beneath the print. We see winged History reaching the pen with one hand and with the other pointing at the tapestry held up by Time and Fame. It shows the Maid of Holland, recognizable by her sheaf of arrows and the lion at her feet. To the right of her throne are Liberty, holding a staff with liberty hat, and Religion. In front of them sits Thetis, who is faced by Mars, while above them hovers Mercury: allegories, respectively, of the Dutch naval power, national courage and military art, and extensive trade. The tapestry is bordered with portraits of the princes whose fortunes Painting is asked to 'describe'. By using this word Picart alludes to the fact that Frans van Mieris Jr. (1687-1763) was a painter as well as a historian, the grandson of the much more famous genre painter Frans van Mieris Sr. The historian Frans Jr. was well served by this talent for painting. He was one of those early eighteenth-century historians who dealt with historical Pyrrhonism by putting forward 'genuine pieces of evidence' which particularly included visual source materials. For the *History of the Dutch Princes* he reproduced more than a thousand historical medals. Picart has visualized this by having Numismatics accompany Painting as 'help in providing her works of art to strengthen this History'. Also the putti in the foreground are assisting. As the poem that accompanies the frontispiece has it:

The foreground of this scene	From which Painting completes
Gives a task and role to each figure	A work useful to State and Church
To examine *writings, bulls, seals*,	Of the Netherlands and its neighbours,
Books and ancient *coins*;	Which will endure envy and the ages.

Verklaring der Plaat
Eveline Koolhaas-Grosfeld

Bernard Picart, Titelpagina voor Frans van Mieris jr., *Histori der Nederlandsche vorsten uit de huizen van Beijere, Borgonje, en Oostenryk; welken, sedert de regeering van Albert, graaf van Holland, tot den dood van keizer Karel den Vyfden, het hooggezag aldaar gevoerd hebben*. 's-Gravenhage, bij Pieter de Hondt, 1732-1735. Ets en gravure, 34,2 × 22,2 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet (met onderschrift in het Frans).

'De HISTORIE geeft de SCHILDERKUNST hier eene pen in de hand en noopt haar de gevallen der vorsten, welken [...] over de Nederlanden geheerscht hebben, te beschryven'. Aldus opent (in de Nederlandse versie) de toelichting onder de prent. We zien hoe de gevleugelde Historie met haar ene hand de pen aangeeft en met haar andere wijst op het tapijt dat de Tijd en de Faam ophouden. Daarop is de Nederlandse Maagd afgebeeld, herkenbaar aan de pijlenbundel en de leeuw aan haar voeten. Rechts van haar troon staan de Vrijheid, met staf met vrijheidshoed, en de Godsdienst. Voor hen zit Thetis, tegenover haar staat Mars en daar boven zweeft Mercurius, respectievelijk de 'magtige zeevaart', de 'dapperheid en krygskunde van deezen landaard' en de 'uitgebreide koophandel' verbeeldend. De rand van het tapijt is omzoomd met portretten van de vorsten waarvan de Schilderkunst gevraagd wordt de geschiedenis te beschrijven. Schrijven? Dat klinkt inderdaad vreemd, maar Picart zinspeelt hier op het feit dat Frans van Mieris jr. (1687-1763) behalve geschiedschrijver, ook schilder was, kleinzoon van de veel beroemdere genreschilder Frans van Mieris sr. Dit schildertalent kwam Van Mieris jr. als geschiedschrijver goed van pas. Hij behoorde tot die vroeg-achttiende-eeuwse historici die het historisch Pyrrhonisme van hun tijd te lijf gingen met 'echte bewijsstukken', waartoe zij vooral ook concrete, visuele bronnen rekenden. Zo tekende hij voor de *Histori der Nederlandsche vorsten* meer dan duizend historiepenningen na. Picart heeft dit verbeeld door de Schilderkunst te laten vergezellen door de Penningkunde, als 'hulp in 't verschaffen van haare konststukken ter versterking deezer Historie'. Ook de putti op de voorgrond helpen mee. Het gedicht dat bij deze titelplaat hoort zegt het zo:

De voorgront van dit tafereel
Geeft yder beelt zyn werk en deel
Om *schriften, bullen, zegels, boeken*
En oude *munten* te onderzoeken;
Waer uit de Schilderkunst een werk
Voltooit ten nut van Staet en Kerk
Van Nederlant en zyn gebueren,
Dat nydt en eeuwen zal verdueren.

From the editors

Currently the historical thought of the eighteenth century is an important and even fashionable topic for researchers of the Enlightenment. For many years, however, the enlightened view of the past was neglected. The development of a European historical consciousness was usually understood as the result of the perceived rupture of the French revolution and was situated in the early nineteenth century. Following the critical verdict of nineteenth-century romantic historians, the historiographical writings of the philosophes were not much valued for most of the twentieth century. The eighteenth century was seen according to the romantic cliché as a forward-looking and ahistorical century.

In the last decades, however, the crucial role of the writing of history in the thought of the philosophes has been acknowledged. Also, the merits of the historical writings of the philosophes are currently much more appreciated: it is now generally understood that eighteenth century historiography was much more than just an uncomplicated narrative of universal progress. The importance of Antiquity as well as the Middle Ages as models and counterpoints for the 'modern era' of the eighteenth century has, for instance, been amply demonstrated in recent studies. In many ways, modern historical scholarship is foreshadowed in late eighteenth-century developments. At the same time historians emphasize the different nature of eighteenth-century historical thought from present day historical practices. The modernist and national perspective is now increasingly being brought into question by historians, as the articles in this themed issue also demonstrate.

In this themed issue on 'the Enlightenment and the Past', we focus mainly, but not exclusively, on the Dutch case. Dutch enlightened historiography has so far been one of the blank spots in international research on this theme. Most of the authors of this issue work at the University of Amsterdam, which has become an important centre for the study of eighteenth-century intellectual history. Especially the current Jan Romein professor of historiography and historical theory, Wyger Velema, has been influential over the last decades in stimulating research on the political and historiographical thought of the (Dutch) eighteenth century. This special issue reflects the research done in the Netherlands by junior as well as senior scholars on the problem of the past in the (late) Enlightenment.

On behalf of the editorial board, Matthijs Lok (special editor)

Redactioneel

Het historische denken van de Verlichting vormt tegenwoordig een belangrijk thema voor onderzoekers van de intellectuele geschiedenis van de achttiende eeuw. Lange tijd was er echter weinig aandacht voor dit onderwerp. De ontwikkeling van het moderne historische bewustzijn werd gewoonlijk verklaard door de breukervaring van de Franse revolutie en vooral gesitueerd in de negentiende eeuw. In navolging van het kritische oordeel van vroeg negentiende-eeuwse romantische historici was er weinig waardering voor het historiografische werk van verlichte historici. De achttiende eeuw werd doorgaans beschouwd als een ahistorische en toekomstgerichte eeuw.

In de laatste decennia zien we dat het belang van het historisch werk van de *philosophes* steeds meer wordt onderkend. Ook is duidelijk geworden dat de Verlichte geschiedschrijving veel meer voorstelde dan een ongecompliceerd narratief van universele vooruitgang, zoals het cliché wil. Recente onderzoeken hebben ook de belangrijke rol van de Oudheid en, in mindere mate, de Middeleeuwen als model en contrapunt voor het Verlichte denken aangetoond. In veel opzichten zou gesteld kunnen worden dat de wortels van de moderne geschiedwetenschap in de achttiende eeuw te vinden zijn. Tegelijkertijd benadrukken onderzoekers juist ook het andere karakter van de achttiende eeuwse historiografie. Het modernistische en nationale perspectief wordt steeds meer ter discussie gesteld, zoals ook uit de artikelen in dit themanummer blijkt.

In dit themanummer over ‘De Verlichting en het verleden’ komen vooral, maar niet uitsluitend, Nederlandse geschiedschrijvers aan bod. Tot op heden is de Nederlandse casus relatief onbekend in het internationale onderzoek naar de verlichte historiografie. Tot slot wil ik hier nog speciaal de belangrijke bijdrage aan dit themanummer van de Amsterdamse historicus Wyger Velema noemen. Velema is de afgelopen decennia één van de belangrijkste drijvende krachten geweest achter het onderzoek naar de intellectuele geschiedenis en de historiografie van de Nederlandse achttiende eeuw.

Namens de redactie, Matthijs Lok

Introduction: The Enlightenment and the past
Old controversies and new perspectives

Wyger R.E. Velema

This introduction starts with a sketch of the most salient features of the historiography of the Enlightenment and demonstrates that the enlightened approach to the past was hugely influential and rapidly set new standards for historical writing all over Europe. It proceeds to explain how, from the late eighteenth century on, the prestige of Enlightenment historiography was undermined by a number of developments, including an unprecedented series of political revolutions, the emergence of a methodologically sophisticated academic history, and the rise of a romantic historical sensibility. It was not until the twentieth century that the historiography of the Enlightenment was rehabilitated. The introduction ends with an overview of the most recent developments in the study of Enlightenment historiography and, against that background, a discussion of the various contributions to this issue of *De Achttiende Eeuw*.

The historical thought of the Enlightenment

Enlightenment historians were, on the whole, rather pleased with their own achievement. They had every reason for this self-assured estimate of their contribution to the civilization of their time. History was more popular than ever before. The great works of Enlightenment historiography, from Voltaire's *Siècle de Louis XIV* and *Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations* to David Hume's *History of England* and Edward Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, had found their way to the polite reading public of the eighteenth century.[1] Against this background, Hume's frequently cited remark that he was living in 'the historical Age' seems fully understandable and appropriate.[2] Yet it was not just popular success which underpinned the self-confidence of the Enlightenment historians. They could also and with considerable plausibility claim to have reshaped the entire field of historical studies beyond recognition.

At the dawn of the Enlightenment, historiography clearly was in deep trouble. The great tradition of classical narrative and political history was still alive, but it had taken a merciless pounding from the adherents of the new

1 Information on the eighteenth-century reading public for historical works can be found throughout Bourgault and Spurling, *Companion to Enlightenment Historiography*.

2 Mossner, *Life of David Hume*, 318.

historical Pyrrhonism. This powerful seventeenth-century current of skeptical thought, running from Descartes through La Mothe le Vayer to Pierre Bayle, had exposed the inevitably biased nature of the historian's enterprise and had cast grave doubt on the reliability of both ancient and modern historical knowledge.[3] The challenge of Pyrrhonism could to some extent be effectively met by a further refinement of the techniques of erudite antiquarianism, but antiquarian studies did not result in polished historical narratives and were therefore unable to reach an audience larger than that of specialists.[4] Finally, as far as the grand scheme of history was concerned, it had become clear that the kind of providential history as still recounted in Bossuet's *Discours sur l'histoire universelle* (1681) was no longer credible or acceptable after the *crise de la conscience européenne*, but an alternative comprehensive account of history had yet to emerge.[5] Confronted with these predicaments, the men (and some women) of the Enlightenment energetically set to work and, with their ingenious blend of narrative, erudition and *philosophie*, succeeded in breathing new life into historiography. It cannot be doubted that a prominent role in the initial phase of this collective endeavor was played by Voltaire. He was the one who not only squarely took on providential history as represented by the likes of Bossuet, but also succeeded in replacing it with his own enlightened 'philosophie de l'histoire'. In Voltaire's new philosophical history it was no longer God who determined the course of events, but the progress of the human mind, the 'progrès de l'esprit humain'. History therefore became the story of secular development. Momentous as this breakthrough was, it was by no means the only significant contribution Voltaire made to the historiography of the Enlightenment. For not only did he insist that history was the story of the secular progress of the human mind, he also pointed out and demonstrated that this story could not be told in terms of European history alone. Nor could it be reconstructed through the deeds of kings, statesmen and soldiers, the protagonists of classical narrative history. An enlightened historiography worthy of its name needed both a broad geographical scope and an emphasis on society and culture rather than on politics.[6]

Important and indispensable as both Voltaire's suggestions for an enlightened 'philosophie de l'histoire' and his actual historical writings were, they were neither entirely original, nor did they solve all the problems eighteenth-

3 See e.g. Meijer, *Kritiek als herwaardering*; Brumfitt, 'Historical Pyrrhonism'; Burke, 'Two Crises of Historical Consciousness' and Grafton, *What Was History?*
4 Hay, *Annalists and Historians*, 133-168.
5 Hazard, *Crise de la conscience européenne*.
6 Brumfitt, *Voltaire Historian*; Velema, 'Verlichte vergezichten'.

century historians were struggling with. Voltaire's philosophy of history heavily leaned on the historical genealogy of the Enlightenment which had emerged from the *querelle des anciens et des modernes*.[7] Soon, however, other practitioners of the new historiography began to point out that writing history in terms of the progress of the 'esprit humain' was not entirely satisfactory. That story, they observed, needed a firm and systematic grounding in the material aspects of the past. Attempting to develop a general law of historical development, they formulated the immensely influential four stages theory of history.[8] But there was an even more fundamental area in which Voltaire's approach to history was deemed to be seriously flawed. Writing history for overtly polemical purposes, Voltaire had demonstrated a deep contempt for the exact details of history. 'Woe to details! Posterity neglects them all; they are a kind of vermin that undermines large works', he confidently wrote to the abbé Dubos in 1738.[9] Yet it had precisely been the refusal of historians working in the tradition of classical and humanist historiography to base their work on the detailed and trustworthy findings of erudite antiquarianism which had made them so vulnerable to the biting criticism of the historical Pyrrhonists. In a process that reached its culmination in Gibbon's learned tomes, many enlightened historians after Voltaire therefore strove to integrate antiquarian findings into their narrative histories and thereby may be said to have laid the foundations for the modern practice of history.[10]

By the time Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* started appearing in 1776, a new and enlightened historiography had thus firmly established itself. It had effectively fought off the threat of historical Pyrrhonism by integrating erudition and narrative. Replacing providential history with the secular vistas of *philosophie*, it offered new master narratives conceived in terms of the progress of the human mind or the progress of society through the stages of hunting, pasturage, agriculture, and commerce. It had freed itself from the limiting classical and humanist focus on politics and war and had expanded the field of historical inquiry to include the economy, society, and culture. The geographical scope of this new history, moreover, was considerable. Indeed, when Edmund Burke in 1777 wrote a letter to congratulate William Robertson with the appearance of his *History of America*, he emphasized the fact that historians were now writing about the history of the entire world: 'The Great

7 Edelstein, *The Enlightenment*.
8 Meek, *Social Science*.
9 Cited in Stern, *Varieties of History*, 39.
10 Momigliano, 'Gibbon's Contribution'; Hay, *Annalists and Historians*, 169-185.

Map of Mankind is unrolld at once; and there is no state or Gradation of barbarism, and no mode of refinement which we have not at the same instant under view'.[11]

Aspects of this new enlightened historiography were rapidly appropriated all over Europe. In the Dutch Republic, where humanist traditions remained strong, historians began to experiment with enlightened history rather late. But they too did in the end embrace key aspects of the new approach to history, as various contributions in this issue of *De Achttiende Eeuw* make clear.[12] Where the main themes of enlightened historiography were still relatively absent from Jan Wagenaar's enormously successful *Vaderlandsche Historie*, published in 21 volumes between 1749 and 1759, during the following decades historians such as Simon Stijl and Cornelis Zillesen quickly made up for this deficiency.[13] By 1780 Elie Luzac, an ardent admirer of the historical writings of David Hume and William Robertson, could approvingly observe:

> In recent years, people have started to write a different kind of history. It is no longer considered beneath the dignity of the human mind to know how countries became populated, how civil societies arose and developed. This new history has established that civil society owes more to industry and diligence in the arts, commerce, and navigation, than to the devastating art of war; and that, where the latter is needed for the protection of country and people, it is only the former that can assure a happy and pleasant life.[14]

An even more glowing Dutch tribute to the accomplishments of the Enlightenment in the field of historiography was delivered by the last Grand Pensionary of the Dutch Republic, Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel, himself a historian of considerable merit. Deposed from his functions and incarcerated in 1795, Van de Spiegel spent his time in prison trying to come to grips with the meaning of the Enlightenment. It was an intellectual movement he regarded with a great measure of ambivalence. It had in his eyes replaced intellectual depth with a superficial breadth of knowledge in many areas, had led to the profound misunderstanding that informed and uninformed judgments were of equal worth, and had suffered from a completely unfounded overestimation of its own achievements. For whereas it was certainly undeniable that the

11 Cited in Armitage, *Modern International Thought*, 38.
12 On eighteenth-century Dutch historiography in general see Van Deursen, 'Wijsgerige geschiedschrijving' and Haitsma Mulier, 'Between Humanism and Enlightenment'.
13 On Wagenaar see Wessels, *Bron, waarheid en de verandering der tijden*; on Stijl Smitskamp, 'Simon Stijl'.
14 Luzac, *Hollands Rijkdom*, vol. I, 146-147.

age of Enlightenment had in many ways removed the ‘rust of Barbarism’ from European civilization, it was also true that it had remained inferior to the civilization of the ancients.[15] Yet despite all such objections it had to be admitted that the Enlightenment had brought some fields of human endeavor to previously unknown heights. Prominent among these was the writing of history. Classical and humanist historiography had systematically failed to address the most important topics:

> History, as it used to be practiced before our century, told the story of the acts of the Great, rather than those of the Peoples; it was about Kings, not about human beings; it consisted of little more than a dry chronological sequence, an endless cycle of wars, battles, conquests, revolutions, oppression and violence: such topics were certainly not altogether useless to know about, but History has the potential to teach us about far more useful matters.[16]

And it was this potential, Van de Spiegel maintained, that the historiography of the Enlightenment had unleashed, thereby raising itself far above the level of even the greatest of the Greek and Roman historians:

> The Historians of our Time have tried to explain the origin of Civil Societies, their good and bad aspects, and the natural consequences thereof; they have made clear to us the progress of Civilization, and the fruits of the Arts and Sciences; the bonds between Peoples both of the old and the new World constituted by Traffic and Commerce. In a word, they have written the History of Human Beings for Human Beings and in their hands history has developed into a veritable school for this and the next Centuries.[17]

Whatever else might according to Van de Spiegel have been wrong with the Enlightenment, it had clearly been a great and unambiguous blessing for the study of the past.

Enlightenment historiography attacked and vindicated

At the very moment the precepts of enlightened historiography were increasingly finding acceptance all over Europe, however, a massive attack on this approach to the past was already in the making. This should of course not unduly surprise us, since it is quite usual for intellectual fashions to pass, and for styles of thought to replace each other. Yet the forces - political, institutional,

15 Van de Spiegel, ‘Gedagten over de verlichting’, 485-490.
16 Ibidem, 493.
17 Ibidem, 494.

and cultural - undermining the historical worldview of the Enlightenment were experienced as particularly powerful by contemporaries, and they succeeded in utterly ruining its reputation for a very long time to come. In the political arena, it was the impact of the French revolution (an expression here used as shorthand for all the political upheavals of the time) which wiped away the relatively serene historical universe of the enlightened historians. This had been a universe of slow historical development, in which the improvement of the human mind or the progress of society through different stages had played a central role, but in which it had also remained possible to see a measure of continuity between the past and the present and to acknowledge, for instance, that the moderns firmly stood on the shoulders of the ancients. Despite all the changes the Enlightenment had brought to the theory and practice of history, the past had retained its role as *magister vitae*. The shock of the cataclysmic political events of the late eighteenth century suddenly brought this sense of continuity to an end, convinced many contemporary observers that a deep and permanent rupture between the past on the one hand and the present and the future on the other had opened up, and thus inaugurated a new *régime d'historicité*. It was a *régime* in which the past was no longer seen as capable in any direct way of providing lessons for human action in the present, but was increasingly regarded as different and distant, perhaps even as an object of passive nostalgia.[18]

The second development which brought the historiography of the Enlightenment into disrepute might be termed institutional: it was the rise of academic history and its attendant methodology. The historians of the Enlightenment had, as we have seen, been highly aware of the threat posed by historical Pyrrhonism. In order to fend it off, they had increasingly distanced themselves from the rhetorical nature and techniques of classical and humanist historiography. Instead, they turned to the findings of erudite antiquarianism to give their historical narratives a solid base in ascertainable and dependable fact. Even though their frequently somewhat casual practice often fell short of their own prescripts, the marriage between history and antiquarianism the historians of the Enlightenment brought off may be said to have constituted a highly significant breakthrough. Their immediate successors, however, regarded it as entirely inadequate. The austere German professional scholars who, from the second half of the eighteenth century on, were turning history into a methodologically stringent academic discipline insisted that it was not

18 Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft*; Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present*; Hartog, *Régimes d'historicité*.

enough to simply use the findings of erudite antiquarians. Historians themselves had to become rigorous and consummate practitioners of the 'philologisch-kritische Methode'. Pioneered by Göttingen historians such as Gatterer and Schlözer, further refined by Niebuhr, this demanding type of source criticism was brought to perfection by the man who came to embody the new academic history: Leopold von Ranke.[19] Ranke even went one step further and argued that applying the critical method to source material was not enough. In addition, the historian had permanently to immerse himself in the archives. Indeed, as Anthony Grafton has observed, 'collections of primary sources and folders of archival acts acted on Ranke like clover on a pig'.[20] In the light of this rapid professionalization of academic history, the rise of the critical method, and the 'archival turn' in history, the historiography of the Enlightenment could in nineteenth-century retrospect appear as at best amateurish and naive, at worst entirely devoid of worth.

Neither the sudden break in historical continuity brought about by the French revolution nor the methodological refinements of the new academic history, however, were as harmful to the reputation of enlightened historiography as was the rise of a new romantic historical sensibility. Romanticism, it has justly been remarked by Tim Blanning, by its very nature 'does not lend itself to precise definition, exegesis and analysis' and no attempt to provide any of these will be made here.[21] Yet in order to understand the profound aversion many nineteenth-century commentators came to feel for the historiography of the previous century, a brief look at the impact of the elusive 'romantic revolution' on the theory and practice of history is indispensable. Historians have long struggled to capture the precise nature of the changes romanticism brought to the perception of the past. One of the more intriguing, and certainly one of the more elegant attempts was made by the Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga. For Huizinga, the roots of the romantic perception of the past were to be sought in a changing conception of nature. Whereas the eighteenth century had regarded nature as a mechanical phenomenon that could be rationally studied, Huizinga argued, the end of the eighteenth century saw the rise of an esthetic appreciation of the natural world, a world that now came to be regarded as better approached through the creative imagination than through rational analysis. This shift in turn deeply influenced the perception of

19 Reill, *German Enlightenment*; Ziolkowski, *Clio the Romantic Muse*, 1-32; Schulin, *Traditionskritik*, 24-43; Iggers, *German Conception of History*, 29-89.

20 Grafton, *The Footnote*, 35. Ranke's obsession with archives is discussed in Eskildsen, 'Ranke's Archival Turn'.

21 Blanning, *The Romantic Revolution*, 6.

the past: ‘The entire way the past is viewed changes: it is no longer a model, an example, a rhetorical arsenal or a cabinet of curiosities, but fills the mind with longing for the faraway and the strange, with the desire to intimately experience that which once existed’.[22] Later commentators have generally followed Huizinga's emphasis on the importance of the abandonment of the mechanical view of nature and its consequences for the ways in which history was perceived. They have in addition, among other things, explored the romantic fascination with the lost world of medieval religiosity, the romantic aversion to historical generalizations and the obsession with historical particularity, and the romantic desire to evoke rather than to analyze the past.[23] Taken together, these shifts clearly meant that for the nineteenth century the historical universe of the Enlightenment had completely lost its relevance. Summarizing matters in his habitual extreme way, Thomas Carlyle in 1830 concluded that the analytical Enlightenment ‘cause-and-effect speculators, with whom no wonder would remain wonderful, but all things in Heaven and Earth must be computed and ‘accounted for’ [...] have now wellnigh played their part in European culture; and may be considered [...] verging towards extinction’.[24]

Looking back from a much later perspective at the political, institutional and cultural developments which at the end of the eighteenth century and in the early decades of the nineteenth century were held to have definitively undermined the premises of the historiography of the Enlightenment, we may well somewhat relativize their decisive importance. The French revolution, we may now conclude, was indeed a rupture which deeply changed the way the past was perceived, but so were the *crise de la conscience européenne* and the *querelle des anciens et des modernes* of the decades around 1700.[25] The new academic historians may have poured scorn on their Enlightenment predecessors, but we are now in a position to recognize that in their attempts to combine research and narrative they were in fact deeply indebted to the historical achievement of the eighteenth-century. And in some areas, for instance in its renewed narrowing down of the subject matter of history to politics, we have come to regard their work as an impoverishment of the grand

22 Huizinga, ‘Natuurbeeld en historiebeeld’, 356.
23 Haddock, *Introduction to Historical Thought*, 90-105; Blaas, ‘Romantiek en historisch besef’; Tollebeek et al., *Romantiek en historische cultuur*; Blanning, *The Romantic Revolution*, 108-175; Mathijsen, *Historiezucht*.
24 Cited in Stern, *Varieties of History*, 97.
25 Hazard, *Crise de la conscience européenne*; Norman, *Shock of the Ancient*.

historical vision of the Enlightenment.[26] Even the profound change in historical sensibility brought about by romanticism, the enduring importance of which is beyond dispute, in retrospect turns out to have left ample room for the survival of themes first broached in Enlightenment historiography.[27] Yet the fact remains that the nineteenth century came to regard the historical achievement of the Enlightenment as entirely inadequate and that its verdict has continued to resonate in scholarship for a remarkably long time. Even the eminent and subtle historian Friedrich Meinecke, who had come to regard the historical thought of the Enlightenment with a certain measure of sympathy, nonetheless persisted in discussing it as hardly more than a necessary preliminary stage for the development of *Historismus*.[28] Many other and less gifted historians until deep into the twentieth century simply continued uncritically to echo the polemical pronouncements of their nineteenth-century predecessors.[29]

It was also in the course of the twentieth century, however, that ever stronger signs of a rehabilitation of the historical thought of the Enlightenment began to emerge. Ironically, this process started in Germany, the very country which had played such a prominent role in vilifying the 'superficial' historical worldview of the Enlightenment. As early as 1901, Wilhelm Dilthey vigorously attacked the romantic cliché of an ahistorical Enlightenment in his essay 'Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert und die geschichtliche Welt'.[30] Some thirty years later the influential philosopher Ernst Cassirer followed in Dilthey's footsteps. In his *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung*, originally published in 1932 and translated into English in 1951, he devoted an entire chapter to the Enlightenment's 'conquest of the historical world' and began it with the provocative observation that 'the common opinion that the eighteenth century was an 'unhistorical century', is not and cannot be justified'.[31] It took a while for these historiographical clarion calls to reach the Anglophone world of scholarship, but at the 1963 First International Congress on the Enlightenment Hugh Trevor-Roper, perhaps the most brilliant British historian of his generation, lectured the audience on 'The Historical Philosophy of the Enlightenment'. Although Trevor-Roper's speech was in many ways rather bizarre, for instance in anachronistically crediting the *philosophes* with the invention of 'the concept of the organic nature of

26 Burke, 'Ranke the Reactionary'.
27 Blaas, 'Romantiek en historisch besef'.
28 Meinecke, *Entstehung des Historismus*.
29 For a discussion of the remarkable persistence of this line of argument see, most recently, Bourgault and Spurling, *Companion to Enlightenment Historiography*, 1-22.
30 Dilthey, 'Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert'.
31 Cassirer, *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, 197.

society', he made it abundantly clear that the Enlightenment had produced a 'positive historiographical revolution', a revolution richly deserving of further and more detailed study.[32] This challenge was taken up in the second volume of Peter Gay's *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, which appeared in 1969. In his chapter 'History: Science, Art, and Propaganda', Gay lambasted the nineteenth-century critique of Enlightenment historiography as 'partisan and time-bound'. He proceeded to claim that the *philosophes* had revolutionized the study of history and that the new map of the past they had drawn was still 'recognizable and usable - in many respects our map'. To demonstrate the truth of this rather bold claim, he pointed to the way the Enlightenment had definitively secularized history, had dramatically expanded the range of its topics, and had vastly extended its reach in both space and time.[33] Gay's was in many ways a bravura performance and certainly still had its uses, but it also made clear that the debate on the historical thought of the Enlightenment had now become stuck in a series of rather facile and less than fruitful binary oppositions. Indeed, the endless attempts to determine whether the historical thought of the Enlightenment was modern or not now slowly began to appear as distractions from what was still sadly lacking at the time Peter Gay wrote his chapter: a history of Enlightenment historical thought with a genuine historical character.[34]

New perspectives

Over the past few decades, steps towards such a more genuinely historical history of Enlightenment historiography have indeed been taken. Developments, however, have been rather slow and the history of historiography has certainly not undergone a methodological transformation comparable to that of the history of political thought.[35] Yet even a brief look at recent general discussions of Enlightenment historiography demonstrates that questions regarding its 'modernity' are fortunately no longer as prominent as they used to be and that, instead, serious attempts are now being made to understand it in its various early modern and eighteenth-century contexts.[36] One of the

32 'The Historical Philosophy of the Enlightenment' has recently been reprinted in Trevor-Roper, *History and the Enlightenment*, 1-16.
33 Gay, *The Enlightenment*, vol. II, 368-396.
34 The phrase 'genuinely historical' is, of course, taken from Skinner, *Foundations*, vol. I, xi.
35 The history of historiography has, as J.G.A. Pocock recently observed, 'still not acquired a clear sense of its procedures and purposes', in part because of 'its continuing domination by the theory and philosophy of history'. Pocock, 'Edward Gibbon as an Early Modern Historian', 2.
36 See, e.g., Kelley, *Fortunes of History*, 1-25; Wright, 'Historical Thought in the Era of the Enlightenment'; Burrow, *A History of Histories*, 331-366.

areas in which this new emphasis has produced fruitful results is that of the analysis of the grand themes of Enlightenment historiography. As we have seen, Enlightenment historians, having swept aside the master narrative of providential history, in their attempts to provide secular explanations for the course of history introduced new overarching themes such as the progress of the human mind and the succession of various economic stages. Yet precisely how these themes were reflected in the way these historians wrote their works until recently remained largely unexplored. Through the work of Karen O'Brien and, above all, J.G.A. Pocock, however, we are now able to discern how the historians of the Enlightenment slowly forged an 'enlightened narrative' which revolved around the gradual emergence of a system of sovereign European states, sharing a commercial and polite culture, from the long darkness of medieval 'barbarism and religion'.[37] At the same time, it has become increasingly clear that, despite the progressive nature of the 'enlightened narrative', the work of many enlightened historians remained more deeply entangled with the heritage of the classical and the humanist historians than had previously been supposed. This is, for instance, quite evident in the explanations the Enlightenment offered for a historical occurrence with which it was almost obsessively preoccupied, the decline and fall of the Roman Empire: these remained largely classical and humanist.[38] But the continued relevance and importance of the ancients also emerges in other contexts. The outcome of the *querelle* can no longer be regarded as an unambiguous victory for the *modernes*; classical historical examples turn out to have lost very little if any of their power in the eighteenth century, and enlightened historians freely kept combining linear and cyclical historical perspectives.[39]

This move towards a less anachronistic and more nuanced understanding of the main features of Enlightenment historical thought has been further reinforced by the fact that the lesser figures in Enlightenment historiography are now starting to receive the attention they deserve. It has long been one of the main tenets of the Cambridge school that the writings of the creative geniuses of political thought can only be properly understood against the background of the more conventional works of their contemporaries. The same may be said to hold true for the great works of historiography. It is

37 O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment*; Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, particularly vol. II: *Narratives of Civil Government*.

38 For this theme, the third volume of Pocock's *Barbarism and Religion* is indispensable: *The First Decline and Fall*.

39 Edelstein, *The Enlightenment*; Norman, *Shock of the Ancient*; Fumaroli, *Le sablier renversé*; Grell, *Le Dix-huitième siècle et l'antiquité*; McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson*.

therefore a substantial gain that the study of Enlightenment historical thought is now in the process of considerably broadening its scope. This more inclusive approach has already produced significant new insights. It has, for instance, led to an entirely novel appreciation of the great importance the Enlightenment attached to the production of narrative histories of ancient Greece and Rome and has revived the reputation of previously ignored authors such as the abbé Vertot, Louis de Beaufort, and Nathaniel Hooke.[40] As a result, general surveys of Enlightenment historical thought can now no longer be written without paying ample attention to the eighteenth-century study of the ancient world.[41] Important as such detailed and meticulous reconstructions of the historiographical landscape of the eighteenth century are, they are only part of a more encompassing modification of our interpretation of the historical thought of the Enlightenment. Of equal significance to this enterprise has been the recent emphasis on the fact that the historical interest of the Enlightenment manifested itself in a multiplicity of genres not ordinarily included in the study of historiography. The *querelle* of the decades around 1700, for instance, has traditionally been regarded as primarily a literary quarrel. As Larry Norman has convincingly shown, however, it ultimately revolved around different conceptions of the uses of the past and should therefore be included in any account of the historical thought of the eighteenth century.[42] Similarly, Mark Phillips has drawn our attention to the fact that in eighteenth-century Britain historical thought manifested itself in many different genres and that there was a much 'greater diversity in historiographical practice than we generally acknowledge'.[43] Over the past decades, in short, it has become increasingly clear that a proper study of the historical thought of the Enlightenment can no longer limit itself to a few canonical authors. Their accomplishments can only be understood against the background of the historical writing of a host of nowadays lesser known historians and can only be properly appreciated in the context of a broader world of historical thought traceable through a great variety of genres.

Many of the themes adumbrated in this introduction are taken up in the various articles published in this issue of *De Achttiende Eeuw*, which is largely devoted to the study of eighteenth-century historical thought. The first contribution, by Jacques Bos, offers the reader a broad survey of the ways in

40 Raskolnikoff, *Histoire romaine et critique historique*; Moore et al., *Reinventing History*; Avlami et al., *Historiographie de l'antiquité et transfers culturels*; Lianieri, *The Western Time of Ancient History*.

41 See, e.g., Bourgault and Spurling, *Companion to Enlightenment Historiography*, 437-503.

42 Norman, *The Shock of the Ancient*.

43 Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, xi.

which the entire early modern period conceived of its relationship to the past. Following what by now has become a familiar line of argument, Bos insists that the anachronistic search for the historical origins of nineteenth-century historicism has marred much previous scholarship on the historical thought of the early modern period. Instead, he contends, we should focus our attention on the specific nature of the early modern interest in the past. Starting in the Renaissance, early modern historical thought could no longer conceive of the past as entirely similar to and continuous with the present. Yet neither did it regard the past as in all respects fundamentally different from the present, as historicism would later do. It was precisely this highly ambivalent attitude, most clearly manifested in the endless debates about the respective merits of the ancients and the moderns, which constituted the most salient characteristic of early modern historical thought, to which Bos sees the historical thought of the Enlightenment as still emphatically belonging.

The remaining four articles all focus on aspects of historical thought in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic. This emphasis is a most welcome one, since despite the fact that scholarly interest in the Dutch Enlightenment has blossomed over the past decades, the varieties of eighteenth-century Dutch historiography have hitherto remained curiously underexplored. It has already been pointed out in the above that the Dutch approach to the past remained largely traditional and humanist until deep into the eighteenth century. Eventually, however, many Dutch historians came to embrace the changed orientation and the new themes of international Enlightenment historiography. They did so in contexts that were specific to the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic, such as the existence of a strongly republican political culture, the synthesis of protestantism and Enlightenment that had emerged in the course of the century, and the steadily growing public perception of economic, moral and political decline.[44] These particular features of the Dutch intellectual and cultural scene could and did in many cases lead to a marked historiographical preoccupation with the history of the Dutch Republic itself. Yet, as Eleá de la Porte convincingly demonstrates in her contribution, Dutch eighteenth-century historians also invested considerable energy in studying more comprehensive themes. Indeed, they produced no fewer than three histories of the entire world. In keeping with recent scholarly trends, De la Porte's article analyzes a lesser known historiographical genre and demonstrates its importance for our understanding of Enlightenment historical thought. Writing world histories

44 The best general survey of Dutch Enlightenment culture remains Kloek and Mijnhardt, *1800*.

was, of course, a form of historiography with a long tradition behind it.[45] What makes De la Porte's story so fascinating is that she is able to show how this age-old genre was gradually yet completely transformed by the incorporation of the themes, methods and techniques that we have come to associate with Enlightenment historical thought. While she carefully avoids the temptation to present this development in terms of the rise of historiographical modernity, De la Porte nonetheless makes it abundantly clear that the late eighteenth-century historical universe of Martinus Stuart, with its highly developed interest in the secular progress of society, was fundamentally different from the early eighteenth-century one of Geerlof Suikers and Isaak Verburg.

Where Eleá de la Porte rescues a hitherto largely neglected genre of Dutch eighteenth-century historical writing from undeserved oblivion, Jan Rotmans focuses on the historical interests of a widely known but seldom studied Dutch enlightened historian: Cornelis Zillesen. This turns out to be a fruitful choice, since Zillesen's approach to the past reveals a great deal about the tensions and ambivalences to be found in enlightened historical thought. Zillesen was a tax collector, a land measurer, an inventor, an enthusiastic participant in enlightened sociability, and a passionate although rather inconsistent contributor to the political debates of the last two decades of eighteenth century. Above all, however, he was a prolific publicist, who authored, among many other works, two multi-volume histories largely devoted to the Dutch past. Zillesen's historical thought, Rotmans argues, was the result of a complicated and never entirely resolved balancing act between two seemingly incompatible approaches to history. On the one hand, he clearly adopted the main tenets of the ‘enlightened narrative’. He was in no doubt whatsoever that history could be told as a story of human progress, in which eighteenth-century Europe could be held to have surpassed not only the barbarous middle ages, but also the civilizations of the ancient world. On the other hand, his historical outlook remained profoundly shaped by the classical republican view of history, in which the everlasting cycle of virtue and corruption implied the everlasting rise and decline of states. To Zillesen, it was entirely certain ‘that every people reaches a certain level of development, and, having reached that point, naturally declines again’. This was a view he even held on to after both the French and the Batavian revolution. His historical thought therefore evidently casts doubt on the well-known thesis that the late eighteenth-century revolutions constituted such a dramatic rupture that

45 Kelley, *Fortunes of History*, 16-20.

an entirely new and modern *régime d'historicité* became inevitable.[46] Among practitioners of the history of political thought it has by now become a widely accepted view that the revolutionary era of the late eighteenth century cannot possibly be comprehended as the unambiguous beginning of modernity. Rotmans's contribution powerfully suggests that the same may hold true for the historical thought of those turbulent decades.

The final two historiographical contributions to this issue of *De Achttiende Eeuw* continue the exploration of relatively unfamiliar dimensions of eighteenth-century Dutch historical thought. Christophe Madelein's article takes the reader into the world of literature and illustrates the fact that the study of texts not habitually regarded as belonging to the province of historiography may nonetheless yield important insights into the eighteenth-century sense of the past.[47] His topic is the eighteenth-century Dutch epic. Madelein's contribution is similar to that of Eleá de la Porte in that it tries to come to grips with the ways in which the enlightened eighteenth-century impinged upon a highly traditional and very old genre. It is, of course, dissimilar, because the epic was a literary genre governed by strictly classical rules of content and composition. An epic was supposed to relate the elevated deeds of elevated heroes in a highly stylized setting. Madelein, however, successfully demonstrates that the eighteenth-century Dutch epic loosened up these rather strict rules. Whereas seventeenth-century Dutch epics had predominantly dealt with biblical themes, the later eighteenth century saw the emergence of the history of the Dutch nation as one of the most desirable themes for epic treatment. This development, which may be said to have started with Onno Zwier van Haren's *The Beggars* (1771), was accompanied by a significant change in the subject matter of the epic. It has repeatedly been pointed out in this introduction that the Enlightenment considerably broadened the scope of history and rejected the exclusive classical and humanist focus on the exemplary deeds of mighty kings, statesmen and soldiers. Similarly, the eighteenth-century Dutch historical epic moved away from the great deeds of elevated heroes to emphasize the pious simplicity and love of the family and the fatherland evinced by common Dutchmen throughout the centuries. It thus both mirrored and contributed to a broad shift in the way the past was perceived.

In Mathijs Boom's discussion of the historical work of Adriaan Kluit we encounter yet another face of eighteenth-century Dutch historical

46 See above, note 18.
47 See above, note 42 and 43.

thought and we are reaching the outer limits of the historical world of the Enlightenment. In many ways Kluit, who undoubtedly was one of more celebrated Dutch historians of the later eighteenth century, remained a typical early modern historian. His great work, the *History of the States Government of Holland*, published in five volumes between 1802 and 1805, while perhaps 'singularly prosaic and prolix', was nonetheless a 'stunning compendium' of the Dutch constitutional debate as it had been conducted ever since the sixteenth-century Revolt.[48] He repeatedly made it clear, moreover, that he believed history and politics to be intimately connected and he enthusiastically put this conviction into practice by frequently harnessing his historical findings to his conservative political preferences. At the same time, however, Kluit was in some respects evidently moving beyond what had by his time become the conventional practices of Enlightenment historiography in the Dutch Republic. This no doubt had something to do with the fact that, in contrast to many of his contemporary fellow historians, Kluit was an academic, who spent most of his life as a professor at Leiden University. Yet far more important, as Boom rightly stresses, was the fact that he was deeply influenced by the profound transformation German historical scholarship was undergoing at the end of the eighteenth century.[49] As a result, Kluit turned against what he had come to regard as the amateurish historical methods of his Dutch contemporaries and insisted that history should be thoroughly empirical and based on the most advanced techniques of source criticism. With Adriaan Kluit, in short, we find ourselves on the threshold of the academic and professional way of doing history that would come to dominate the nineteenth century.

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48 Van Eijnatten, 'Adriaan Kluit', 564; Leeb, *Ideological Origins*, 271.

49 See above, note 19 and in addition Bödeker et al., *Aufklärung und Geschichte* and Ulrich Muhlack, 'German Enlightenment Historiography and the Rise of Historicism', in: Bourgault and Spurling (ed.), *Companion to Enlightenment Historiography*, 249-305.

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Historical thought from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment

Jacques Bos

Some authors claim that the first traces of modern historicism can already be found in the early modern period. This is, however, a questionable point of view. Early modern historical thought had its own specific nature, which can be described in terms of a continuous quarrel between ancients and moderns. Until the end of the eighteenth century the past was unproblematically used as a source of examples for the present. At the same time, however, several authors started to explore the distinct character of the past, and there were important developments in the field of historical method. Significant changes occurred in the way the past was approached between 1500 and 1800, but underneath these changes early modern historical thought retained the paradoxical trait of combining an appreciation of the differences between past and present with a belief in their basic similarity.

What is the past and how can we get to know it? To many of us these questions may seem examples of pointless philosophising, either because they have obvious answers or because they are fundamentally unanswerable. At some periods in history, however, these questions were vehemently contested; new answers emerged, and they mattered a lot, not just to people engaged in writing history, but to a significant part of the educated public. An example of such a period is the time around 1800, when the rise of historicism revolutionised the way Europeans approached the past. Other examples are the Renaissance and the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns. In comparison with the emergence of historicism, there is less scholarly consensus about the extent to which thinking about history was really transformed in these periods. Yet, it cannot be denied that the Renaissance and the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns were highly concerned with the nature of the past, its relation to the present and the way to understand it.

When we ask what the past is and how we can know it, we are dealing with questions belonging to two different domains. The latter question is epistemological; it is about the methods with which we can obtain knowledge of the past and the way historical knowledge is to be evaluated. The first question is ontological; it is about the nature of the past and its relation to the present. The past may, for instance, be seen as fundamentally different

from the present, or basically identical with it, and the course of history may be regarded as a necessary process, or as a collection of contingent episodes. The ontological and the epistemological realm should not be regarded as completely isolated from each other; certain assumptions held in one domain may affect ideas in the other domain. A central ontological belief of historicism is, for instance, that the past is radically different from the present. When this is assumed, acquiring knowledge of the past becomes a problem; the epistemological question arises how we can say something about a past world that fundamentally differs from our present world. In the historicist answers to this question two main tendencies can be distinguished. The first approach tries to address the difficulties involved in getting to know the past by devising rigorous empirical methods. The second approach emphasises that bridging the gap between past and present is not primarily a matter of empirical research, but a matter of interpretation.[1]

This paper explores the development of thinking about history from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, with a view to constructing a conceptual framework for further study in this field. The scope of my analysis is broad: I intend to say something about historical thought in Europe, or perhaps more specifically in those parts of Europe intellectually shaped by the Latin tradition. In this geocultural region intellectual exchange across political boundaries was substantial, but there also was, of course, a huge variety in ways of dealing with the past. National and religious contexts were important in the creation of specific objects of memory and the formation of specific historical cultures. These differences are, however, primarily differences connected with 'the social circulation of the past', to use a term coined by Daniel Woolf.[2] Despite the fact that they were often interested in quite different parts of the past and put historical knowledge to quite different social and political uses, on a more fundamental level Europeans had to deal with the same ontological and epistemological issues. Beneath the variety of historical cultures in Europe we find a common concern with the relation between past and present in general and with the problem of historical knowledge.

These issues will mainly be examined here by critically analysing the scholarly discussions in which they are addressed. An extensive analysis of primary material would require a book-length study instead of a journal article. Besides, the academic debate about early modern historical thought

1 For a recent overview of historicist thought, see Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition*.
2 Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past*. See also Kuijpers et al. *Memory before Modernity*.

is in need of some charting and analysis. Key episodes in the development of thinking about history, such as the Renaissance and the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns, have mainly been studied in isolation, while synthesising interpretations of early modern historical thought are rare. Of course, there are notable exceptions to this rule, such as Zachary Schiffman's recent book *The Birth of the Past* (2011). Schiffman tries to give an integrated account of early modern thinking about history, but without a very extensive critical discussion of the views of other scholars. That seems to be typical of the state of affairs in this field: there is an abundance of analyses and perspectives, but not much of a systematic exchange of views. Furthermore, the shadow of historicism looms quite large over much work on early modern historical thought: a significant number of authors tend to regard the early modern period primarily as the prehistory of historicism, which often results in a rather problematic search for the roots of historicism in the sixteenth, seventeenth or eighteenth centuries.

Thinking about history in the Renaissance

The shadow of historicism over the interpretation of early modern historical thought extends as far back as the Renaissance, and is possibly even stronger there than in the analysis of later developments in thinking about history. This might be the effect of another shadow looming over the field of Renaissance studies, that of Jacob Burckhardt's nineteenth-century interpretation of the Renaissance as the beginning of modernity, the birth ground of modern individualism, modern secularism and modern politics. Burckhardt did not pay much attention to Renaissance historical thought, but among later generations of Renaissance scholars there is a strong tendency to see the Renaissance attitude towards the past as one of the signs of its modernity. This typically involves an assessment of Renaissance thinking about the past as an early form of historicism, since historicism is the dominant set of beliefs about history in the modern world of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A very outspoken example of this interpretation of Renaissance historical thought is Peter Burke's analysis in his small book *The Renaissance Sense of the Past* (1969). Although elsewhere Burke strongly rejects the Burckhardtian emphasis on the modernity of the Renaissance, he regards the Renaissance view of the past as quintessentially modern - and thus historicist - in practically all its aspects. In his opinion, Renaissance authors discovered the distinctness of the past, which made them wary of anachronistic interpretations of history. The historical methods they used mirrored this concern; Burke suggests that the Renaissance

view on historical method did not fundamentally differ from the critical approach to sources that lies at the heart of the historicist paradigm. Burke is absolutely not the only author claiming that the Renaissance perspective on the past is to be seen as historicist to all intents and purposes. In the past decades this seems to have been the dominant interpretation of Renaissance historical thought; a mass of uncritical references to Burke in many studies is a clear indication of the large scholarly consensus in this field.

That there was a renewed interest in history, and especially in the classical past, in the Renaissance is beyond dispute, but what this renewed interest in the past exactly involved is less clear. Erwin Panofsky argues that there is a fundamental difference between the medieval and the modern attitude towards classical antiquity. The Middle Ages had ‘a sense of unbroken continuity with classical antiquity’, despite being wary of its pagan nature. In the Renaissance classical antiquity came to be experienced as a distant reality, as ‘a totality cut off from the present; and, therefore, as an ideal to be longed for instead of a reality to be both utilized and feared’.[3] Quentin Skinner closely follows Panofsky's analysis of the Renaissance perspective on the classical past, claiming that Renaissance authors regarded the ancient world as ‘a wholly separate culture’ to be understood ‘on its own distinctive terms’. This appreciation of the classical past involved ‘a new sense of historical distance’ that Skinner regards as ‘genuinely historical’.[4]

When Panofsky and Skinner assert that Renaissance authors discovered the distinctness between the classical past and the present, they are implicitly attributing a historicist point of view to the Renaissance. J.G.A. Pocock is more explicit about this, labelling the historical consciousness of the Renaissance as ‘an early form of historicism’.[5] According to Pocock the Renaissance sense of historicity is closely connected with the reappraisal of political activity in the Renaissance. Since they assumed that human action was the central factor in shaping social and political life, Renaissance authors came to see the historical process as essentially contingent. Here, Pocock draws a sharp contrast with medieval thought, which tended to see history as a necessary process, ultimately shaped by God, and resulting in the redemption of man at the end of time. In *The Limits of History* Constantin Fasolt makes a similar claim.[6] According to Fasolt, the Renaissance discovered the most

3 Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, 110-113.
4 Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* I, 86, 105-106, 109-110.
5 Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, 3.
6 Fasolt, *The Limits of History*, 3-32.

fundamental assumption of modern historical consciousness, the distinction between past and present. Underlying this discovery is the view that history is the product of time-bound human actions; therefore, the past cannot be understood in terms of the present. Just as Pocock, Fasolt emphasises the political relevance of history in the Renaissance. He even regards this political dimension of the Renaissance sense of history as the central characteristic distinguishing it from modern historicism, which focuses on the disinterested accumulation of objective historical knowledge.

The claim that the Renaissance perspective on the past was essentially historicist seems hard to maintain when we consider the degree to which Renaissance authors regarded the past as a collection of examples or parallels that could directly be applied to the present. This is what Reinhart Koselleck means when he argues that the Ciceronian dictum *historia magistra vitae* is the focal point of early modern historical consciousness. According to Koselleck, the early modern emphasis on the use of historical examples implies that different periods in the past can be discussed in essentially the same terms and that nothing substantially new will happen in the future. It was not before the late eighteenth century that the future came to be seen as open and unpredictable and that different eras in the past came to be regarded as fundamentally incommensurable. Koselleck describes this shift of perception of the past as a fundamental change in the experience of historical time.[7] Koselleck's thesis has been elaborated upon by François Hartog, who has coined the term *régimes d'historicité* as an analytical tool to describe attitudes towards past, present and future in various periods and cultures. Just as Koselleck, Hartog claims that a fundamental shift in Western historical thought occurred around the end of the eighteenth century, when the idea that the past could serve as a source of examples lost its appeal.[8] Strikingly, the analyses by Koselleck and Hartog of the changing conception of historical time are highly similar to Pocock's discussion of the transformation of historical consciousness in the Renaissance, even to the extent that Pocock also uses the term ‘historical time’ to explicate his views. The main difference is, of course, that Pocock observes a decisive shift around 1500, while Koselleck and Hartog regard the decades preceding 1800 as crucial.

It is not easy to establish who is right here, especially since there does not really seem to be a sustained scholarly debate in this field - the views of Pocock and Koselleck on the transformation of historical time are,

7 Koselleck, ‘Historia Magistra Vitae’.
8 Hartog, *Régimes d'historicité*.

for instance, rarely discussed in conjunction. Yet, the thesis that Renaissance historical thought was already essentially historicist appears to be the weaker one, because it cannot really account for the quite unproblematic application of past examples to the present by Renaissance authors. Scholars claiming that the Renaissance discovered a fundamental difference between past and present clearly seem to be overstating their case. Does that mean, however, that we should conclude that the Renaissance attitude towards the past did not involve any appreciation of the historicity of the world at all?

There is a middle ground in this discussion, describing Renaissance historical thought as historicist in some respects, though nevertheless fundamentally different from modern historicism. This is, in a nutshell, the position defended by Schiffman in *The Birth of the Past*. Schiffman emphasises the importance of the emerging awareness of anachronism in the Renaissance for the development of a view of the past as distinct from the present, but describes the Renaissance sense of anachronism as 'local'. This means that it only involved an awareness of the specific differences between the present and the classical past, without paying attention to historical relativity in general. At the same time, however, Schiffman argues that the Renaissance regarded the past as a 'living past', to be used as an example for the present.[9] In the end, Schiffman seems to regard the historical consciousness of the Renaissance as a paradoxical phenomenon, involving both a sense of difference between past and present and a sense of similarity that makes it possible to use the past as a source of examples for the present.

Ronald Witt also emphasises the contradictions in Renaissance historical thought. One of the most important effects of the humanist engagement with classical texts is, according to Witt, the rise of a new sense of temporality, the core of which is already visible before Petrarch. The central element in this new conception of time is a form of perspectivism, which means that authors orient themselves temporally by relating past events to their own position in time. The Renaissance perception of time remains, however, caught in a tension between, on the one hand, the idea of a temporal distance between the ancient past and the present, and, on the other hand, the assimilation of the ancient past as an example that is to be imitated. Witt claims that around 1400 the humanist sense of temporality became more pronounced; classical texts 'gradually assumed the appearance of historical artefacts', which involved a growing awareness of anachronism. Yet, the Renaissance sense of

9 Schiffman, *The Birth of the Past*, 138-152, 254-265.

the past did not lose its paradoxical nature. As Witt puts it, the effort to imitate ancient authors entailed 'cultivating a complex, almost oxymoronic sense of accessibility and historical distance'. The intensified historical awareness of the fifteenth century 'initially nourished a buoyant confidence in the power of human reason, informed by knowledge of the past, to construct the future'.[10] This analysis of fifteenth-century historical thought echoes Koselleck's view that early modern historical thought regarded past, present and future as one continuous space. Witt subsequently points out that early sixteenth-century Italian authors, such as Machiavelli, had a less optimistic view on the possibility of rationally shaping the future. Although Witt does not explicitly draw this conclusion, his observation suggests that the decisive shift in thinking about the past might not have occurred around 1400, but later, in the early sixteenth century.

Elsewhere I have argued that the historical work of Machiavelli and Guicciardini is strongly informed by a sense of rupture caused by the disastrous political events taking place in Italy in their days.[11] Yet, although we can observe a greater sense of historical distance in the works of Machiavelli and Guicciardini than in the writings of their predecessors, we do not see a historicist dismissal of the idea that the past can be used as a source of examples for the present. Especially Machiavelli tends to regard past and present as a continuous space in which actions and events can be described in the same terms without significant contextualisation. In the *Discourses* he explicitly defends the use of the classical past as a source of inspiration for the present, arguing that the amount of virtue and vice in past and present is essentially the same and that men act on the basis of essentially the same passions, despite the fact that changing customs create the impression that there are substantial differences between past and present. Guicciardini is more hesitant about the use of past examples, even criticising his friend Machiavelli for endlessly talking about the Romans.[12] If we would want to point out an example of a more or less historicist point of view in Renaissance historiography, Guicciardini would be one of the first authors to take into consideration, also because of his interest in historical method. Yet, in many respects Guicciardini remains quite a traditional Renaissance historian, who may be critical of Machiavelli's use of Roman examples, but does not reject the use of the past as an example for the

10 Witt, *'In the Footsteps of the Ancients'*, 500-501.
11 Bos, 'Renaissance Historiography'.
12 Machiavelli, 'Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livius', 190, 322-324, 521; Guicciardini, *Maxims and Reflections*, 69.

present on principle.[13]

In his recent (2013) book on the concept of historical distance Mark Phillips also indicates that Machiavelli and Guicciardini appear to have a different kind of relation to the past. To Machiavelli, the past is not a distant phenomenon, but quite an unproblematic source of parallels and examples to acquire knowledge about political life. In Guicciardini's work, on the other hand, Phillips observes a rather strong sense of distance between past and present. In the end, Phillips explains the contrast between Machiavelli and Guicciardini as an effect of a difference in personal temperament.[14] To some, such an explanation on the basis of personal characteristics and preferences might seem somewhat unsatisfactory, but it might also be hard to make sense of the contrast between Machiavelli and Guicciardini in another way. Anyhow, it is important to note that awareness of historical distance and of the distinct character of the past became an intellectual option in the sixteenth century, though not a widely shared attitude. In some passages in his work, Machiavelli too seems to consider the possibility that past and present are fundamentally distinct, but only to discard it.

The varieties of historical method in the early modern period: philology, antiquarianism, and the analytics of history

The views on Renaissance historical thought discussed in the previous section mainly deal with ontological assumptions about the nature of the past in works of traditional historiography, dealing with political events. There were, however, also other forms of engagement with the past in early modern Europe, such as philology, antiquarianism and legal history. Characteristically, the most significant early modern innovations of what we would call historical method occurred in these fields, and not in traditional historiography. Probably the most frequently mentioned example of the impact of applying new methods to examine the past is Lorenzo Valla's unmasking of the *Donation of Constantine* as a forgery. Valla's arguments were primarily philological: he showed that the document in which emperor Constantine granted worldly authority to the Pope could not possibly have been written in the fourth century, because the Latin used in the text was of a later date. Humanist philology is often credited with discovering the historical relativity of language, connecting differences in grammar and style with different contexts. Janet Coleman has convincingly

13 Bos, 'The Model of Rome in Florentine Historiography and the Problem of Renaissance Historicism'; Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, 271-301.

14 Phillips, *On Historical Distance*, 42-58.

argued, however, that in essence this idea was already present in the nominalist philosophies of the Middle Ages.[15] Yet, the range of its applications and its critical force seem to be much larger in the Renaissance, as is shown by Valla's example, and by the historical acumen present in the work of other philologists. In numerous books Anthony Grafton has shown how humanist textual analysis was the foundation for significant advances in historical scholarship in the early modern period.[16] Grafton does not just discuss the role of philology in the Italian Renaissance, but also draws attention to the work of later authors working in northern Europe, such as Joseph Scaliger. Scaliger, a French scholar who became professor at the newly founded University of Leiden in the late sixteenth century, revolutionised the science of chronology by employing critical philological methods to establish the exact date of historical events.[17]

In the 1970s Donald Kelley published a study on the historical approach to Roman law by sixteenth-century French humanist scholars. By applying philological methods to the text of the *Corpus iuris civilis* these scholars came to the conclusion that Roman law was not a timeless and universal legal system, but the product of a specific historical context. Kelley claims that this insight implied an appreciation of historical relativity that is usually assumed not to have emerged before the nineteenth century. Thus, French philological scholarship inaugurated 'the first stage of European historicism'.[18] A related thesis is defended by George Huppert, who argues that sixteenth-century French historians developed the techniques that 'provided the foundation upon which modern historical scholarship was built' and had a 'historical-mindedness' that could be described as historicist.[19] Nevertheless, it should be noted that the humanist legal scholars studied by Kelley never really doubted the relevance of Roman law for their own time. Similarly, the historians studied by Huppert continued to emphasise that historical knowledge should have a philosophical application in the present. Therefore, it is highly questionable whether the application of philological methods to the study of history in sixteenth-century France can be said to have undermined the ontological assumption of a basic similarity between past and present.

Arnaldo Momigliano has played a decisive role in turning scholarly attention to the antiquarian tradition. Early modern antiquarians studied relics from the past, such as archaeological monuments, inscriptions, statues

15 Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories*.
16 See especially Grafton, *Defenders of the Text*.
17 Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger*.
18 Kelley, *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship*.
19 Huppert, *The Idea of Perfect History*, 166, 178.

and coins. According to Momigliano, the difference between historians and antiquarians is that the first write in a chronological order and try to explain certain events or situations, while antiquarians write in a systematic order and try to discuss all items connected with a certain subject. There already existed an antiquarian tradition in classical antiquity; an important author was Varro, who systematically charted all the aspects of Roman life in the past. In the Middle Ages archaeological remains and inscriptions continued to be noticed and studied, but the Varronian ideal of a systematic survey of all aspects of a civilization no longer existed. It was revived in the Renaissance, for instance in the work of Flavio Biondo, who tried to evoke a comprehensive image of ancient Rome by studying its ruins, until then largely ignored. While Renaissance antiquarians were actively engaged in uncovering new sources of historical knowledge, historians of the time did not question the truth and completeness of the classical historical works that served as an example to them. History was mainly aimed at commenting on classical authorities such as Livy and Tacitus, not on trying to replace their accounts of the past with better ones.[20]

Momigliano claims that the early modern antiquarian tradition was of pivotal importance for the development of modern historical methods - and thus for the rise of modern historiography. More than traditional historians, antiquarians were capable of resisting the challenge of historical pyrrhonism. This term indicates a fundamental scepticism concerning historical knowledge that started to emerge in the late seventeenth century. Antiquarians had developed a set of techniques for the critical analysis of non-literary evidence that were highly useful to counter this scepticism. These techniques, together with philological methods, were the basis for Mabillon's *De re diplomatica*, which quickly after its publication in 1681 became an authoritative manual for the study of documentary evidence. From the late seventeenth century onwards, as a way of countering historical pyrrhonism, historians increasingly turned to the methods and objects of antiquarianism to establish historical truth. The so-called auxiliary sciences of history started to develop on an antiquarian foundation.[21] It should be noted, however, that this fusion of history and antiquarianism was not a development that immediately and irrevocably transformed European historical writing. Especially in France, Enlightened historians tended to be quite critical of the use of antiquarian

20 Momigliano, 'Ancient History and the Antiquarian', 286-293.
21 Ibidem, 295-310.

erudition in understanding the past, regarding it as an approach focusing on mostly irrelevant details. Blandine Kriegel even speaks about ‘la défaite de l'érudition’ in eighteenth-century France.[22] Yet, the antinomy between Enlightened historical analysis and antiquarian erudition was not inevitable. The most notable illustration of this fact is Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, which combines an Enlightened perspective on history with a meticulous use of primary source, rooted in the antiquarian tradition.[23]

What was definitely not a foundation for the emergence of a critical engagement with textual and material sources was the genre of texts known as *artes historicae*, which emerged in the sixteenth century and gained a significant popularity, to fade away again at the end of the seventeenth century. Although the term *ars historicae* suggests that we are dealing with manuals of historical method, these texts are mainly about the uses of history and the rhetorical techniques involved in historical writing. The explanation of classical precepts played an important role in the genre - most notably Cicero's *historia magistra vitae*. In a way, the genre of the *ars historica* can be said to elaborate on the principles of traditional historiography, which was mainly interested in the exemplary function of the past and was not too concerned with critical methods. As Anthony Grafton has pointed out in a recent book about the genre, around 1700 it quickly lost its appeal. Grafton is not very explicit about the causes of this development, but by contrasting the traditional *artes historicae* with the new critical methods of philology and antiquarianism he suggests that the latter won the plea.[24]

Yet, some texts belonging to the tradition of the *artes historicae* are more than merely a repetition of classical commonplaces. In the French *artes historicae* of the later sixteenth century we also find explorations of the nature of historical knowledge and efforts to develop methods of establishing historical truth by critically analysing sources. Jean Bodin's *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* (1566), one of the most widely read treatises in the genre of the *ars historica*, is an attempt to organise historical knowledge in a systematic fashion, along the lines of Petrus Ramus's schematic arrangement of knowledge in general. Typical of Bodin's approach is, for instance, the idea that the history of a nation can be explained on the basis of its character, which,

22 Barret-Kriegel, *La défaite de l'érudition*. See also Grell, *l'histoire entre érudition et philosophie*.

23 For Gibbon, see Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*.

24 Grafton, *What was History?*

in its turn, strongly depends on environmental circumstances.[25] Authors such as Kelley and Huppert have interpreted Bodin's approach to history as an early form of historicism, discovering the specific and distinct character of the past by applying philological methods. Yet, this does not seem to be an accurate view of what Bodin is doing. I would suggest describing his perspective on the past as an 'analytics of history', which approaches phenomena in the past by systematically comparing them with and relating them to other phenomena.

In the eighteenth century Montesquieu turned to the past in a manner that is quite comparable to Bodin's analytics of history. According to Schiffman, Montesquieu brought about a revolution in historical thought by applying the analytical methods of seventeenth-century science and philosophy to the study of the past. As a result, Schiffman claims, it became possible to speak of the past as radically distinct from the present.[26] This is, however, a rather questionable claim. In the first place, it fails to recognise the undeniable continuity between Bodin and Montesquieu, who not only have a very similar analytical approach to the past, but even say comparable things about, for instance, the role of national character in history. It is hard to see the fundamental difference between an analytics of history on a Ramist foundation and one based on the new science and philosophy of the seventeenth century.

Ancients and moderns

The Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns is much less part of the prevailing narrative of the development of historical consciousness than the Renaissance or the years around 1800. This might be explained by the fact that the Quarrel was in the first place a literary dispute, which puts it beyond the horizon of most historians of historiography. Furthermore, it was not concerned with methods of historical research. Instead, the dispute was mainly ontological, addressing the extent to which classical literature could be regarded as exemplary, and thus exploring the nature of the relation between past and present. It is because of this that the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns could be seen as a crucial episode in the development of European historical thought, rethinking the central points of the debate on the past of the Renaissance, while preparing the ground for certain key aspects of Enlightenment thought.

In older scholarly literature, the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns - and its British counterpart, known as the Battle of the Books -

25 Couzinet, *Histoire et méthode à la Renaissance*.
26 Schiffman, *The Birth of the Past*, 226-265.

tended to be interpreted as a victory for the perspective of the Moderns.[27] The basic argument of the Moderns was that classical literature could not unequivocally be used as a model for present-day literature, because the social and cultural environment of the present was fundamentally different from that of the past. They attributed this difference to factors such as the rise of modern science and the development of more rational forms of government than existed in the ancient world. Because of these distinctive features the present age could even be seen as superior to the classical past. According to the traditional interpretation of the Quarrel, this argument of the Moderns gave rise to a sense of historical distance that did not exist before. Their view that the present was better than the past developed into one of the central tenets of Enlightenment thought, the idea that the historical process was essentially progressive. Thus, the conventional understanding of the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns turns it into an intermediate stage in a Whig account of the development of modern historical consciousness. Whereas the Renaissance hesitantly discovered anachronism, the Moderns in the Quarrel discovered a more fundamental distinction between the past and the present, but without holding the historicist view that the past is so radically different from the present that it can only be understood in its own terms. Just as their intellectual successors in the Enlightenment, the Moderns evaluated the past with the norms and values of the present - a perspective explicitly rejected by nineteenth-century historicists.

More recent discussions of the Quarrel are less one-dimensional than the traditional interpretation. In *The Shock of the Ancient* (2011) Larry Norman emphasises that the positions of the Ancients and the Moderns in the Quarrel were in reality not as clear-cut as usually assumed. Norman agrees with the conventional view of the Quarrel that developments such as the rise of modern science and modern forms of government brought about a sense of distance between past and present. Furthermore, and this is not a novel analysis either, he points to the engagement with the classical world of Renaissance humanism and the discovery of the Americas as reasons why authors in the late seventeenth century came to see the classical past as different from the present. Norman does not, however, attribute this new sense of historical distance exclusively to the party of the Moderns. In his opinion, the Ancients were just as aware of the distance between the present and the classical past as the Moderns, but drew different conclusions from this awareness. Unlike the

27 Bury, *The Idea of Progress*; Jones, *Ancients and Moderns*.

Moderns, the Ancients did not reject the use of classical literary models in the present. According to the traditional interpretation of the Quarrel, this view was rooted in an ahistorical perception of the classical past and the present as being essentially similar. Norman, however, shows that the Ancients' emphasis on the exemplary character of classical literature was strongly driven by their sensitivity to its otherness. Still, this otherness could not be so radical as to preclude all understanding of the ancient past. As Norman puts it, the perspective of the Ancients presupposes that classical works of literature 'must be at the same time alien enough to provide *alternative* models, and yet relevant enough to provide at least partially *accessible* models'.[28]

This description of the Ancients' attitude towards the classical past does not seem to differ much from the analysis earlier in this article of the paradoxical nature of the Renaissance sense of the past. That would point to a significant continuity between the Renaissance and the Quarrel. In the 1950s Hans Baron already drew attention to this continuity, in an article in which he described the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns as 'a problem for Renaissance scholarship'.[29] More recently, Marc Fumaroli has also emphasised the continuity between the Renaissance and the Quarrel.[30] According to Baron and Fumaroli, the relation between the classical past and the modern world was already disputed in the Italian Renaissance, and this dispute continued in the early seventeenth century, both in Italy and in France.[31] Seen from this perspective, the Quarrel is rather an episode in an ongoing debate than a unique and radical shift in the perception of the past, contrary to both the traditional interpretation of the Quarrel and Norman's revisionist view.

Norman acknowledges that there is some truth to the reading of the Quarrel as 'one in a series in which ancient and modern are variants whose meaning is to be assigned according to the historical situation in question'.[32] In his opinion, the late seventeenth century should nevertheless be seen as an exceptional period of rupture and transition because of its intense engagement with questions of historical identity and otherness. In Norman's account, what ultimately seems to distinguish the attitude towards the past of the Quarrel - both among Ancients and Moderns - from that of the Renaissance is the kind of experience involved in it. In the late seventeenth century the ancient

28 Norman, *The Shock of the Ancient*, 16-17.
29 Baron, 'The *Querelle* of the Ancients and the Moderns as a Problem for Renaissance Scholarship'.
30 Fumaroli, 'Les abeilles et les araignées', 263-278.
31 For the Italian roots of the Quarrel, see Margiotta, *Le origini italiane della Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*.
32 Norman, *The Shock of the Ancient*, 20.

past began to be experienced as alienatingly strange; historical consciousness was shaped by a 'shock of the ancient' that the Renaissance did not know in a comparably penetrating form. Furthermore, the idea of the classical past in the Quarrel was more historically differentiated than in the Renaissance. This is, according to Norman, 'the true interest' of the Quarrel. Partially because of the idea of the Moderns that the historical process should be seen as progressive, distinctions began to be made between the more 'primitive' Homeric age, and the more 'modern' eras of classical Athens and especially imperial Rome. The Moderns frequently identified the Augustan age as the most modern period of the ancient world, drawing parallels between the reign of Augustus and that of Louis XIV. For the Ancients, the Homeric period was fascinatingly different. Anne Dacier, translator of Homer and prominent polemicist in the party of the Ancients, clearly expressed the nature of this fascination when she wrote: 'I find those ancient times all the more beautiful in that they so little resemble our own'.[33]

Rethinking the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns might also affect our understanding of the attitude towards the past of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment sense of the past has long been interpreted in the negative light shed over it by nineteenth-century historicism. The proponents of historicism in the nineteenth century condemned the historical writing of their Enlightenment predecessors for explicitly judging the past from the perspective of the present and not understanding it in its own terms. In a sense, the traditional interpretation of the Quarrel complements the historicist critique of the Enlightenment. The failure of Enlightenment historians to understand the past in its own terms could be explained by their view, inherited from the Moderns in the Quarrel, that the historical process is essentially progressive. Since the present is supposed to be better than the past, especially in the sense of being more rational, it can serve as a legitimate starting point for evaluating the past. In an extreme version of this view, the Enlightenment becomes an utterly ahistorical age, lacking even the most elementary form of historical consciousness.

This one-dimensional interpretation of Enlightenment historical thought has increasingly been criticised. On the one hand, students of historicism have dismissed the caricatural image of the Enlightenment as a fundamentally ahistorical era, pointing out that nineteenth-century historicism is rooted in the methods and standards of eighteenth-century historical

33 Ibidem, 1 (for the quote by Anne Dacier), 21-28.

writing.[34] On the other hand, the view of Enlightenment thought as exclusively or primarily a celebration of modernity has been questioned as well. In a substantial stream of studies published in the last few years the role of antiquity in Enlightenment thought has been reappraised.[35] Besides, rethinking the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns also compels us to reconsider its connection to the Enlightenment. Marc Fumaroli not only sketches the prehistory of the Quarrel in the Renaissance and the early seventeenth century, but also the continuing concern with the relation between the ancient and the modern world until the end of the eighteenth century. In the middle of the eighteenth century Fumaroli observes a 'return to antiquity', especially in the field of aesthetics. Winckelmann's classicism is perhaps the best known example of this development, but Fumaroli shows that many more authors and artists rediscovered antiquity and opposed it to the flaws they perceived in the modern world.[36] An enigmatic author such as Vico could also be understood much better by connecting his thought with the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns. In Isaiah Berlin's influential reading Vico is an early historicist, whose views seemingly come up from nowhere.[37] This reading overlooks, however, that in creating his 'new science' Vico was directly responding to issues raised in the Quarrel.[38] In Dan Edelstein's recent (2011) interpretation of the Enlightenment the Quarrel occupies a central place, as 'the catalyst that precipitated the Enlightenment narrative'.[39] According to Edelstein, who rather traditionally focuses on France in his account of the Enlightenment, the Quarrel provided the *philosophes* with a conceptual framework to think about knowledge, history, politics, religion and society, and to reflect on their own position in the history of thought. This did not mean, however, that their debates were still shaped by the partisan distinction between Ancients and Moderns. The *philosophes* praised modernity, but did not hesitate to use classical authors to underpin their own views and to extol the intellectual virtues of antiquity.

Conclusion and outlook

On the basis of the preceding analysis of the scholarly debate on the development of historical thought from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment

34 Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism*; Jaeger and Rüsen, *Geschichte des Historismus*, 11-20.
35 for an overview, see Velema, 'Oude waarheden'.
36 Fumaroli, 'Retour à l'antique'.
37 Berlin, *Vico and Herder*.
38 Levine, 'Giambattista Vico and the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns'.
39 Edelstein, *The Enlightenment*, 45.

several conclusions can be drawn. These conclusions should not be seen as merely summarising the results of scholarly work done in the past. In my opinion, they could also serve as a conceptual framework for further research. Taking this framework into account might clarify some conceptual mistakes and confusions, and will hopefully result in new questions and perspectives. I started this article by making a distinction between the ontological and the methodological dimension of historical thought. Although there might be important interrelations between these two dimensions, they are not necessarily connected. Carefully distinguishing ontological and methodological issues will help us to avoid rash and confused analyses. Illustrative of what can go wrong in this respect is the way Kelley and Huppert conclude that sixteenth-century French humanists held early historicist views because of their use of philological methods. Of course, the use of philological methods might induce a certain awareness of anachronism, but it need not and does not result in a historicist awareness of the fundamental difference between past and present. In a similar vein, Schiffman concludes on the basis of Montesquieu's method of historical analysis - which might not even be as novel as he claims - that Montesquieu was a key figure in the ontological discovery of the past. Speaking from a more general perspective, there is much more continuity between the philological and antiquarian methods of the early modern period and the methods of historical research of the nineteenth century than between early modern and historicist ontological assumptions. We should not conclude from continuity in the one field that there is continuity in the other field as well.

Looking at early modern ideas about the relation between the past and the present, it does not make sense to speak of a decisive breakthrough of a historicist conception of this relation at any moment before the end of the eighteenth century. As we have seen, characterising Renaissance historical thought as an early form of historicism is highly problematic. It is much more useful to approach Renaissance debates about the relation between past and present as an exploration of the relation between ancients and moderns. This would explain the paradoxical nature of the Renaissance sense of the past and of historical time, which is not only visible within the work of individual Renaissance authors, but also in the unresolved discussion between Machiavelli and Guicciardini about the use of the model of Rome. There is much truth in Baron's thesis that the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns should be seen as a problem for Renaissance scholarship. It would make a lot of sense to regard the Quarrel as a problem for Enlightenment scholarship too. Edelstein's

recent reinterpretation of the Enlightenment illustrates this point quite clearly.

The conclusion emerging from these observations is that early modern historical thought can best be characterised as a continuous quarrel between ancients and moderns. This conclusion points both to an important continuity within the early modern period and to discontinuity with the Middle Ages and the nineteenth century. The comparison between ancients and moderns already existed as a rhetorical *topos* in antiquity and in the Middle Ages,[40] but it did not involve the paradoxical perception of the past as both similar and distinct characteristic of the early modern period. When classical and medieval authors asserted that the past was superior to the present, they assumed an unproblematic space of comparison. The past was, so to say, immediately present. In the nineteenth century, after the rise of historicism, the opposite was the case: the early modern quarrel between ancients and moderns had lost its meaning, because the past was regarded as fundamentally absent, as unquestionably and completely distinct from the present.

This point of view concurs with Koselleck's analysis that the modern conception of historical time, centred around the difference between past and present, did not emerge before the late eighteenth century. Koselleck also emphasises the specificity of the early modern period, though in a different manner than I do in this paper. According to Koselleck, the main difference between the Middle Ages and the early modern period is that the former had a Christian eschatological conception of historical time, which gradually disappeared between the late fifteenth and mid seventeenth century, to be replaced by a rational prognosis of political developments and a philosophical view of the historical process. Yet, Koselleck argues that this did not yet involve a fundamental rupture with the Christian perspective, which was characterised by an intimate connection between past and future. In early modern historical thought past and future were not radically separated either, because the future was predicted in terms of what had happened in the past.[41] In the end, Koselleck seems to regard the development of historical thought in early modern Europe as a linear process of modernisation, decisively accelerating at the end of the eighteenth century. What I would like to emphasise, on the other hand, is the essentially paradoxical and inconclusive nature of early modern thinking about history.

Of course, analysing early modern historical thought as a continuous

40 Black, ‘Ancients and Moderns in the Renaissance’, 3-7.

41 Koselleck, ‘Vergangene Zukunft der frühen Neuzeit’.

quarrel between ancients and moderns does not mean that there were no significant changes and transformations in the way the past was perceived. There are definitely differences between the Renaissance, the Quarrel of the late seventeenth century and the Enlightenment; the latter two should not be regarded as the mere afterlife of the Renaissance. This leaves us with many questions to answer and hypotheses to test. Is, for instance, Norman right when he claims that the historical differentiation within the classical past is the crucial innovation of the Quarrel? Or should we seek the difference between the Quarrel and in the Renaissance in the intense 'shock of the ancient' that authors in the Quarrel claimed to experience, unlike their Renaissance predecessors? And what does it mean that the Quarrel is barely concerned with ways of knowing the past, while philological and antiquarian methods went through a significant development in the late seventeenth century? It might also be the case that there was more at stake in the Quarrel than just the relation between past and present. According to Joan DeJean, the Quarrel was a profound intellectual crisis, in which ideas about literature, culture and identity were violently contested, not unlike the culture wars of the late twentieth century.[42] Similar questions can be asked about the Enlightenment and its approach to the past. Edelstein rightly points out that Enlightenment thought was shaped by the problems raised in the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns, but the idea of the distinctness of the past nevertheless does not play a major role in his analysis. Instead, he regards the redescription of the present as a modern epoch and the expectation of an even brighter future as central aspects of the Enlightened view of the historical process.[43] This did not preclude an appreciation of the classical past, which was usually seen as an early period of intellectual flourishing. In the end, Edelstein's interpretation of the historical thought of the Enlightenment remains fairly traditional, centred around the modernisation narrative of the *philosophes*. Rather than emphasising the paradoxical dialectic between the ancient and the modern, between the distinctness and the similarity of the past, Edelstein resolves this tension in an account of historical progress that mirrors the self-description of the Enlightenment. Furthermore, the epistemological dimension of the Enlightenment perspective on the past remains largely out of sight in Edelstein's analysis.

A topic that I have not discussed in this paper is the specific use made

42 DeJean, *Ancients against Moderns*.

43 Edelstein, *The Enlightenment*, 69-74. A similar analysis can be found in Brewer, *The Enlightenment Past*.

of the past in various political or religious contexts. In general, early modern Europeans regarded the study of the past as morally and politically useful. This is in line with their ontological view of the past as somehow similar to the present, despite their awareness of historical difference and historical distance. Moreover, early modern historical epistemology often involved a sense of practical application, quite distinct from the historicist ideal of a disinterested accumulation of objective historical knowledge. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France, for instance, antiquarian and philological methods were frequently used to defend religious beliefs and practices and to legitimate political power by anchoring them in the past.[44] The relation between the ontological and epistemological assumptions in early modern historical thought and the social circumstances in which they emerged is a topic that definitely deserves further research. In *The Social Circulation of the Past* (2003) Daniel Woolf argues that in England in the course of the seventeenth century the past became a 'socially circulated commodity'; this means that much more historical knowledge was disseminated among many more people. According to Woolf, the effect of this development was a marked shift in the ontological view about the nature of the past. In the sixteenth century the past was regarded as a collection of separate events, connected by relations of analogy. After 1700, the past was seen as a process, in which events were connected in causal chains. This also involved a stronger awareness of the difference between past and present, although the past remained 'a boundless sea from which could be fished limitless examples for imitation'.[45] Thus, the result of Woolf's social analysis of historical knowledge is very comparable to the view defended in this paper that early modern historical thought should be seen as a paradoxical phenomenon, combining an appreciation of the differences between past and present with a belief in their basic similarity.

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44 Barret-Kriegel, *La défaite de l'érudition*, 135-175.
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History beyond the nation. Dutch world histories in the Enlightenment

Eleá de la Porte

In the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic three multi-volume world histories were published. Yet the idea persists that Dutch eighteenth-century historians were solely interested in the national past. By studying the three histories of the world that were published in this period, I argue that Dutch historians also adopted a global perspective which allowed them to study more comprehensive themes. I then proceed to show that the authors of these works gradually transformed the age-old genre of world history from a traditional Christian universal history into an 'enlightened narrative' of progress.

Introduction

Eighteenth-century Dutch historians are often portrayed as having been solely preoccupied with the national past.[1] The period after 1750 in particular has been characterised as an era of decreasing interest in the rest of the world, not only for the Dutch Republic, but for Europe as a whole.[2] However, no fewer than three Dutch contributions to the genre of world history were published during the eighteenth century.[3] Two of these were written after 1750 by well-known men of letters in the Dutch Enlightenment, Johannes Martinet and Martinus Stuart, who were both able, each in their own way, to integrate the two key concepts of the historical philosophy of the Enlightenment into the traditional genre of world history: the idea of society as a valid historical research subject and the idea of progress. Thus, these works illustrate that not did only Dutch historians adopt a world perspective, but that in these world histories a narrative of progress was possible as well - despite the common portrayal of the Dutch Enlightenment as being exclusively concerned with the

1 I am grateful to André Vitória for his editing comments on this article and to Wyger Velema for his insightful comments on a previous draft.
1 See for instance: Smitskamp, 'Simon Stijl', 86-102; Van Deursen, 'Wijsgerige geschiedschrijving', 103-120; Kernkamp, 'Van Wagenaar tot Fruin', 121-145; Blaas, 'Het romantische verhaal', 143-146; Van der Woud, *De Bataafse hut*, passim.
2 Van der Zande, 'De universele geschiedenis', 116-121; Burke, 'European Views of World History', 246.
3 Suikers and Verburg, *Algemeene kerkelyke en wereldlyke Geschiedenissen* (1721-1728); Martinet, *Historie der Waereld* (1780-1788); Stuart, *De Mensch* (1802-1807).

national past and the problem of national decline.[4]

While the subject of Enlightenment historical thought has for a long time attracted attention in Enlightenment studies and has recently gained fresh prominence with the works of Karen O'Brien, John Pocock and Dan Edelstein, it is often associated with the affiliated genre of 'philosophical history'.[5] And since Simon Stijl's *The Rise and Bloom of the United Provinces* (1774) is generally considered the only 'real' Dutch exponent of philosophical history, it would appear as if the rest of eighteenth-century Dutch historiography was exclusively concerned with national history in a humanist-protestant tradition.[6] It is the purpose of this article to attempt to demonstrate not only that the interest of Dutch historians in the world outside the Dutch Republic continued well into the eighteenth century, but also that multiple elements of Enlightenment historical thought were incorporated into these works.

The genre of world history offers a unique opportunity to study these questions. Although it was a traditional and resilient genre with roots extending all the way back to classical antiquity, its structure and content changed fundamentally during the eighteenth century - albeit gradually and intermittently - and those changes in many ways mimicked the four main characteristics of philosophical history. The first similarity is that world histories acquired a geographical and temporal scope that far exceeded the traditional biblical boundaries. Geographically, whereas the traditional Biblical world view had encompassed Europe, Western Asia and Northern Africa, from the end of the seventeenth century onwards world histories also included the history of the American Indians, the Aztecs and the Chinese. Chronologically, as the authority of the Mosaic account of the origins of mankind was increasingly called into question, the 6,000 years that traditionally covered the whole of Biblical chronology were replaced by a history of the world from the Stone

4 Mijnhardt, 'De Nederlandse Verlichting', 60-70; Van Sas, *De metamorfose van Nederland*, 53-56. My definition of 'Dutch' in the Dutch Enlightenment is in this article understood as works in the vernacular, while 'Enlightenment' here refers to the tradition of 'philosophical history' as characterised by: Trevor-Roper, 'The Historical Philosophy of the Enlightenment', 1-4.

5 O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment*; Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, 5 vols.; Edelstein, *The Enlightenment. A Genealogy*. For an example of previous work on Enlightenment historical thought see: Collingwood, *The Idea of History*.

6 Smitskamp, 'Simon Stijl', 87-88, 96-99; Van Deursen, 'Wijsgerige geschiedschrijving', 108-115; De Schryver, *Historiografie*, 275. De Schryver recognizes no tradition of philosophical history in the Dutch Republic, with the partial exception of Jan Wagenaar's *Vaderlandsche historie* (1749-1759). Van Deursen does acknowledge the existence of 'philosophical history' in the Dutch Republic. However, in his article he is more concerned with the definition of philosophical history than with a systematic analysis of individual works. Moreover, his article predominantly discusses works on national history, many of which were written in Latin. Nevertheless, Van Deursen is right in his affirmation of this tradition in the Dutch Republic and in his assessment of the continuing importance of the idea of Providence in Dutch historiography, a point that I take up in this article as well.

Age to the rise of commercial Europe in the modern age. The second similarity between philosophical history and the genre of world history in the eighteenth century was that the traditional subject of sacred and political history was broadened to include the historical development of civil society in all respects, from customs and commerce to the history of women. The third similarity was that the authors of world histories increasingly favoured historical explanations over a mere erudite accumulation of detail, and based those explanations on secular rather than theological arguments. The fourth and final similarity is that authors of world histories adopted the idea of progress to breathe new life into historical data that had lost its previous humanist, theological or encyclopaedic framework.[7] The genre of world history thus provides an excellent starting point to analyse how the continuing eighteenth-century Dutch interest in the world changed with the appropriation of the ideas of society and progress.

In this article I have chosen to limit my enquiry to world histories written in Dutch by Dutch authors, thus excluding works on specific non-European countries and omitting Latin world histories or Dutch translations of foreign publications.[8] This leaves us with three, hitherto unstudied, world histories: Geerlof Suikers and Isaak Verburg's five-volume *General Ecclesiastical and Profane Histories of this World* (1721-1728), Johannes Martinet's nine-volume *History of the World* (1780-1788) and Martinus Stuart's six-volume *Man, as he Lives in the Known Parts of the World* (1802-1807).[9] All three authors can be characterised as popularisers, who never left the Netherlands and wrote their world histories based on other people's historical works and accounts from abroad. Although it is a difficult task to ascertain the readership of these works, we may find an indication in Johan van der Zande's analysis of the subscriptions to the Dutch translation of the initially

7 My account of the aims of philosophical history is based on the following sources: Trevor-Roper, 'The Historical Philosophy of the Enlightenment', 1-4; Stuurman, 'Tijd en ruimte in de Verlichting', 79-96; Bourgault and Sparling ed., *Companion to Enlightenment Historiography*, 1-22; Wright, 'Historical Thought in the Era of the Enlightenment', 123-142.

8 My main criterion in selecting these three works was their shared aim to discuss the entire world and to do so in the vernacular. Another criterion was that the works needed to include a temporal development, although they did not need to be 'traditional' historical accounts with chronology as the main framework. Therefore, while Stuart's work is not technically a world history, it is still included because it describes a universal and temporal development of mankind. World histories that only discuss ecclesiastical history were excluded. See for Dutch world histories in Latin or on the history of the church: Haitsma Mulier and Van der Lem, *Repertorium van geschiedschrijvers*, key word 'world history'.

9 Roosenboom has written a short biography of Geerlof Suikers: 'Geerlof Suikers (1669-1717)', 113-115. A master's thesis has been written on Martinus Stuart's history of mankind: Ensel, '"De mensch zoo als hij voorkomt op den bekenden aardbol"'. I have no information on the reception of Geerlof Suikers's work, but the works of Martinet and Stuart - although their influence pales in comparison with that of other contemporary European writers - were well-known and widely read in the Dutch Republic: Van Deursen, 'Wijsgerige geschiedschrijving', 103-120. For an idea of the reading public of Martinet's *Katechismus der Natuur*, see also: Brouwer, 'Sociale ideeëngeschiedenis en bestedingspatronen', 191-202.

English and later European-wide enterprise *Universal History* (1736-1765). The Dutch translation attracted 900 subscribers on its first announcement - a considerable number for that period - and Van der Zande maintains that the cost and size of the work implied a well-to-do reading public.[10] While such numbers are unfortunately unknown for the works discussed in this article, I did find information on the reception of these works. All three world histories were well-received in Dutch review journals and Stuart's work was reprinted in 1818 and 1836, and even translated into German.[11] Moreover, the simple fact that these authors decided to spend their time and energy on multi-volume world histories shows the importance Dutch historians still attached to the subject in the eighteenth century.

Since little is known about these Dutch world histories, I have decided to treat them in chronological order to try to place their specific contribution in their cultural, social and political contexts, while at the same time tracking changes over time. This choice of a chronological account should not be interpreted as an attempt to write a linear history of the 'modern' advancements in Dutch world histories. We should always be wary of writing intellectual history simply in terms of progress, as it obscures the often varying combinations of divergent and even seemingly conflicting ideas in our sources, and can make us overlook the gradual and intermittent way in which changes come about in such a traditional genre as world history.[12] Moreover, we should bear in mind that while world history was more or less acknowledged as a specific genre in the early modern period, history had yet to become a 'discipline'. Therefore, world histories often differed a great deal in content and included subjects from other fields such as ethnography, geology, sociology, philology and political theory. Although I have chosen the perspective of philosophical history to contextualise and interpret the Dutch world histories, throughout my article I will also draw comparisons with eighteenth-century Germany. As the thorough research of Van der Zande and Hedelmut Zedelmaier has shown, the methodological changes in eighteenth-century German contributions to the genre of world history resembled the methodology of philosophical history

10 Van der Zande, 'De universele geschiedenis', 109.

11 for the review of Suikers's world history: *Maandelyksche uittreksels of Boekzaal der geleerde waereld* (1722), 69-87, 211-228 and 322-340. Martinet's world history was reviewed in *Maandelyksche uittreksels of Boekzaal der geleerde waereld* (1785) 403-413 and in *Vaderlandsche Letter-oefeningen* (1780) 415-420, (1782) 492-497, (1783) 247-251, (1784) 121, (1786) 498-503, (1787) 155-159, (1788) 153-157 and (1789) 278-284. Stuart's world history was reviewed in: *Vaderlandsche Letter-oefeningen* (1803) 202-210, (1804) 242-247, (1806) 66-71 and (1807) 203-209. The reprint of Stuart's work in 1835 was also reviewed in *De Recensent, ook der recensenten* (1837) 155-156.

12 Griggs, 'Universal History', 219-221; Burke, 'European Views of World History', 246-247.

as well.[13] At times, I will therefore employ Van der Zande's terminology to alternatively frame the changes in the genre in the Dutch Republic as a development from universal history to world history to a history of mankind. As the eighteenth century progressed, the contributions to the genre gradually evolved from the previous humanist history 'as teaching by example' into a European history of progress in manners to subsequently grow into a theory of universal progress of mankind and society.

Teaching by example: Geerlof Suikers and Isaak Verburg's universal history (1721-1728)

The well-to-do, erudite lawyer Geerlof Suikers (1669-1717) had enough spare time left from his legal practice to write a universal history, but died unexpectedly before his work could be finished.[14] After Suikers's decease, the headmaster of the Latin school in Amsterdam Isaak Verburg, who knew about and admired the manuscript, completed and then published Suikers's world history at R. and J. Wetstein in Amsterdam.[15] The resulting *General Ecclesiastical and Profane Histories of this World* appeared between 1721 and 1728, amounting to over 4,500 pages and consisting of five substantial volumes.[16]

Suikers's world history fit effortlessly into the clear set of conventions that the genre had already acquired in the sixteenth and seventeenth century.[17] It accordingly gave an account of sacred history, which is the history of God's relationship with his people as narrated in the Old and New Testaments and which continued in the history of the church, as well as of profane history, which is the history of worldly events as based on non-Biblical sources.[18] Obviously, sacred and profane history overlapped when dealing with the

13 Van der Zande, 'De universele geschiedenis', 104-121; Idem, 'Popular Philosophy', 37-56; Idem, 'De cultuur van de geschiedenis', 275-292; Zedelmaier, 'Der Beginn der Geschichte', 87-92; Idem, *Der Anfang der Geschichte*, passim; Idem, 'Die Marginalisierung der *Historia Sacra*', 15-26.

14 Roosenboom, 'Geerlof Suikers (1669-1717)', 113-115. So far, I have not been able to determine whether it was ever Suiker's intention to publish the work.

15 Ibidem, 113-115. Because the work was not yet completed, Verburg wrote the last three volumes himself. He was accordingly sued by Suikers's widow who wanted Verburg's name removed from the titlepage of volumes 3-5; however, she lost the case. In this article, I will refer to 'Suikers' when dealing with the overall organisation of the world history and the first two volumes; when discussing the last three volumes, I will refer to 'Verburg'.

16 The full title of the world history was: *Algemeene kerkelyke en wereldlyke Geschiedenissen des Aardkloots of een Verhaal van al hetgene gedenkwaardig in verscheide Ryken en Staten dezer Wereldt is voorgevallen, van de Schepping der Wereldt tot de doodt van Willem III, koning van Engelandt. Mitsgaders de Levens van Mannen en Vrouwen, die zich gedurende dien tydt door geleerdheit of door eenige andere aanmerkenswaardige hoedanigheit vermaard gemaakt hebben*.

17 The conventions that I refer to have been compiled and summarised in: Van Kley, 'Europe's "Discovery" of China', 359-360.

18 Ibidem, 359.

beginnings of world history - both originated from Genesis. Suikers's sacred and profane histories were predominantly arranged along Biblical spatial and temporal boundaries, encompassing Europe, Northern Africa and Western Asia - he also included America, but only from a European perspective - and spanning nearly 6,000 years, from Creation until the present.[19] Suikers structured these 6,000 years according to convention as well with divisions depending mainly on the pivotal moment of the birth of Christ and the type and reliability of the historical sources. His work was therefore not only divided into two eras, before and after Christ, but also into what he called obscure, fabulous or uncertain, and historical periods. These periods were further subdivided - again following convention - into smaller epochs marked by significant historical events, such as the Deluge, the birth of Christ and the founding of the Lombard Kingdom.[20]

Such strict adherence to convention raises an obvious question: if world histories were all organised in much the same way, why did authors bother to write a world history of their own? A first reason for this was that authors wanted to show that their own country, nation or group was the protagonist of sacred, providential history, which was a dire political and religious need, especially after the Reformation.[21] A second reason was that conventions were not as static or unchanging as they may appear at first sight; authors sometimes needed to change the format to include or accommodate new information. This was especially urgent from the fifteenth century onwards because the Biblical and classical world view was increasingly called into question by the discovery of previously unknown parts of the world, such as America, and the influx of new and often challenging information, such as the anomalous chronologies of Chinese history, which seemed to begin before the Flood or even before Creation.[22] A third and final reason to write a world history had to do with practical or personal motives of the author, such as the desire to publish an affordable alternative to expensive editions, to propose a new way of arranging the material or to

19 Ibidem, 359-360; Robertson, ‘Sacred History and Political Thought’, 8.

20 Van Kley, ‘Europe's “Discovery” of China’, 359-360. See for a quick overview the time table Suikers included in volume IV: Suikers, *Algemene geschiedenissen*, vol. IV.

21 Griggs, ‘Universal history’, 221.

22 Grafton, ‘Dating History’, 74-75; Van Kley, ‘Europe's “Discovery” of China’, passim. Although decades often passed before such developments were included in the genre of universal history, they did affect the structure and content of these works. Important in this respect was Georgius Hornius, a professor of history in the Dutch Republic, who in his *Arca Noae* of 1666 not only rejected the dominant four-empire-structure and instead proposed a history divided into eras before and after Christ, but also included the history of the American Indians, Chinese and Aztecs for the first time. Grafton, *What was History?*, 178-179; Klempt, *Die Säkularisierung der universalhistorischen Auffassung*, 114-119.

bring a neglected topic to light.[23]

Suikers fell mainly into the last category. Besides his desire to be the first author to write a world history in Dutch, he wrote his work in response to two recently published world histories, a Dutch translation of Johann Ludwig Gottfried's *Historica Chronica* by Simon de Vries and an anonymous French world history. These works had, in his opinion, not only neglected the earliest Greek history, the story of how the European states arose from the ashes of the Western-Roman empire, and the individual lives of educated men and women, but they had also narrated historical events 'with little attention to their circumstances', for instance omitting a discussion of the 'coincidences' or 'policy' determining battle outcomes or neglecting the 'reasons' for specific political or military decisions.[24] This latter comment on the need to discuss the 'circumstances' of historical events has led Henk Roosenboom to characterize Suikers's world history as 'surprisingly modern' in his short biography of the author, interpreting Suikers's critique as proof of a contemporary view of causality.[25] However, in analysing Suikers's world history we need to be careful not to read into his work what our present mind-set discerns, but to try to approach it from his perspective and to take into account his aims, methods and the actual content of the work.

Suikers's world history was dedicated to a history of men and events in the manner of Thucydides and Tacitus - what Pocock calls 'narrative' history'.[26] His world history had therefore two goals: to teach and to entertain. Above all, history was the teacher of life - *historia magistra vitae* - which was also reflected in Suikers's usage of the plural noun 'histories' to refer to the plethora of individual stories and examples, and in his exclusive focus on political and military history. His inclusion of a separate section on biographies - a genre that remained highly popular throughout the eighteenth century - suited this goal as well, as did his insertion of direct speeches, a common feature of narrative history.[27] It is also from this perspective that Suikers's objective

23 See for the practical reasons: Van Kley, 'Europe's "Discovery" of China', 361-362.

24 Suikers, *Algemene geschiedenissen*, vol. I, introduction. The original Dutch quote: '[...] en in het algemeen de zaken met zeer weinige omstandigheden verhaald; daar het nochtans zeker is, dat de omstandigheden van eene geschiedenisse niet alleen het voornaamste vermaak, maar ook het meeste nut aan den Lezer toebrengen. Want, by voorbeeldt, wat kan men leren uit het eenvoudig zeggen, dat op zo een tydt de Romeinen in een veld-slag de overwinning hebben weggedragen, indien ik niet weet, door wat toeval of beleidt dat voordeel is bevochten. Het zelve heeft plaats in staats-zaken, omtrent welke het weinig voordeel geeft te weten, dat zodanig een besluit is genomen, indien ons niet gezegd wordt, welke redenen daar toe aanleiding hebben gegeven'.

25 Roosenboom, 'Geerlof Suikers (1669-1717)'.

26 Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, vol. 2, 7-10.

27 Haitsma Mulier, 'Erflaters', 133-150; Grafton, *What was History*, 34-49.

of ‘explaining’ should be interpreted. His elucidations did not amount to an endless series of causes and effects - the modern way of viewing historcal causality - but were mostly clarifications of individual political and military events or decisions, provided for the reader's education. For example, Suikers explained Mithridates's decision to ask Sertorius for an alliance by pointing to the latter's military courage and their shared desire to resist the Romans.[28] Or, illuminating the role of fate in the unfolding of historical events, a victory of the Romans against the Cimbren in 101 BC was attributed to the position of the sun.[29] Thus, Suikers provided context in order to elicit a more thorough understanding of history's particular teachings and to allow the reader better to extract these lessons from the past and apply them to the present.

The goal of instructing the reader did not sit well with a continuous narrative of cause and effect. As Pocock states when he characterises the role of explanations in narrative historiography in the third volume of his *Barbarism and Religion*:

> [the ancients] could confront remote with later moments for the rhetorical and instructive value of doing so, and their sense for the relation between them might approach the causal; but ‘a perpetual series of causes and effects’, operating continuously over long periods of time, required a species of narrative hard to combine with the narrative of selected human actions.[30]

However, Verburg included some advice for the reader on how to combat this lack of a coherent narrative in his own separate introduction to the world history. Here he provides the reader with a reading manual in typically humanist fashion that explicitly specifies that it is up to the reader to extract the lessons himself. Only by carefully perusing the world history, Verburg argues, and by compiling information under personalised, categorized headings, such as the rise and decline of empires or ‘exemplary’ political decisions, could a reader reap the true benefits of the work.[31] This method of reading history stemmed directly from customary humanist practices in the centuries before.[32]

Suikers did provide additional small hints throughout the work to guide the reader in this process. In his Roman histories, for example, the reader

28 Suikers, *Algemene geschiedenissen*, vol. I, era IX, chapter XI, 351.
29 Ibidem, chapter X, 340-341. Suikers states that the Cimbren lost the battle because, coming from a cold country, they were not accustomed to the light and heat from the sun. See for another example: Ibidem, 344.
30 Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, vol. 3, 58.
31 Suikers, *Algemene geschiedenissen*, vol. I, introduction.
32 Schiffmann, *The Birth of the Past*, 143-144, 150-151 and 210-212.

could deduce that he was following a 'Gracchan explanation' for the decline and fall of the Roman Republic in AD 27. This well-known narrative of civil wars ran from the brothers Gracchus through Marius and Sulla, Pompey and Caesar, to Antony and Augustus.[33] Suikers presented the murder of Tiberius and Cajus Gracchus after their proposal for the renegotiation of landownership as laying the 'groundwork' for civil strife which would later grow into the full-blown civil wars that eventually ended Rome's freedom.[34] However, other elements were mentioned as well: the decay of Roman virtue because of Asian and Greek influences as exemplified by the long war against the North-African king Jugurtha who on multiple occasions bribed the corrupt Romans; the ambition for high command from individuals and the concentration of power in a single person, as exemplified by Pompey, Caesar and Augustus; and the importance of soldiers, especially their essential role in installing emperors in Rome from the provinces. None of these elements were presented as decisive; it was up to the reader to meaningfully sort these elements and extract the lessons they carried within them. Often, Suikers even provided multiple historiographical perspectives for the reader to choose from, either in the main text itself or in footnotes. For instance, he supplied the reader with several possible reasons for Augustus's departure from Rome in AD 14 and included two different versions of Marcus Brutus's last words.[35]

This leads to the question of how Suikers managed to give coherence to such a learned, narrative history where multiple perspectives were presented and whose lessons the reader was supposed to work out by himself. For Suikers, this coherence was not so much provided by the content of the work as by the chronology that framed his world history. In this sense, Suikers still stood firmly in the tradition of universal history. Because the genre partially stemmed from and was an elaboration of the medieval and early modern Christian world chronicle, chronology reigned supreme. The ultimate goal had been to place history within the Biblical chronological framework from Creation until the present.[36] Along similar lines, Suikers argued that chronology - the temporal framing of the past - was the most important component of his *General Histories*. Indeed, 'it was impossible to write a general overview of

33 Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, vol. 3, 41.
34 Suikers *Algemene geschiedenissen*, vol. I, era IX, chapter VIII, 321-325.
35 Ibidem, chapter XX and XXV, 461 and 514.
36 De Schryver, *Historiografie*, 416.

all histories before you were certain of the correct time frame'.[37] In the next section Suikers not only showed himself aware of the many battles that had been waged in the science of chronology, but he also consciously chose to use the chronology of Seth Calvisius which he deemed the most trustworthy for its concurrence with key events in world history.[38] This very precise chronology - 3,948 years had passed between Creation and the birth of Christ - provided the overall framework and was visible on every page of the world history, the years of the historical events under discussion being included in the margins. For both history before and after Christ, Suikers used a conventional double chronology. In the margins one calendar always counted upwards from Creation, while the other calendar counted downward (in years BC) to the birth of Christ - in expectation of the Coming of the Messiah - and upwards (in years AD) from the birth of Christ - in expectation of the Final Judgment.[39] The strict and detailed chronological division that Suikers adhered to in his world history - in the overall framework and on each individual page - even determined the ordering of the chapters. For example, the history of Venice is not discussed in a single chapter, but scattered throughout his world history in distinct chronological slots, so that after reading the chapter on Venetian history until AD 312 the reader would have to jump ahead several sections to find the continuation of this account.

In order to underscore the difference between Suikers's narrative history and more philosophical world histories, which will be exemplified in this article by Martinet's work, it may be useful to turn briefly to Suikers's history of Europe. Suikers and Verburg highlighted three main events in European history by discussing them in separate, thematic chapters that would later constitute key components in the histories of European progress: the Crusades, the barbarian invasions and the search for commercial routes to the East and West Indies.[40] Although all three events were mainly narrated in

37 For the importance of chronology for early modern intellectuals: Grafton, 'Dating history', passim. The original quote from Suikers reads: '[...] dat 'er onmooglyk een algemeen ligchaam der geschiedenissen kon gemaakt worden, voor dat men verzekerd was ten opzichte van den regten tydt'. Suikers, *Algemene geschiedenissen*, vol. I, introduction.

38 Suikers, *Algemene geschiedenissen*, vol. I, introduction, 'Aanmerking over de Tyd-rekening en de Tydt der Scheppinge'. Seth Calvisius took Joseph Scaliger's chronology as the starting point for his own calculations.

39 Löwith, *The Meaning of History*, 182.

40 The barbarian invasions are not discussed in one separate chapter, but at the beginning of the chapters on each European nation. See for example the earliest history of Spain, France, Britain, Scotland and Italy: Suikers, *Algemene geschiedenissen*, vol. II, era II, chapter XVII ff, 171, 177-178, 187, 193-194; Ibidem, era III, chapter VII, 49-50. However, the importance of the invasions was emphasised by Suikers in his introduction where he lamented the neglect of this topic in other world histories. Ibidem, vol. I, introduction.

political-military terms, thus befitting the narrative history that Suikers and Verburg aimed to write, one exception can be found. While Suikers discussed the Crusades in his separate chapter on the subject solely in political-military terms, chronologically recounting the battles won and lost, in the chapter on the history of Venice that was written by Verburg, the latter suddenly referred back to the Crusades as having played a crucial role in European commercial growth, stating that: 'the fall of Rome and the flooding of the Western parts of Europe by Nordic peoples, had ended the commerce between Europe and Asia, until the Crusades, aimed at saving the Holy Land from the infidels, and starting in the eleventh century, had revived the Europeans' desire for Asia's wealth'.[41] However, this quote stands alone in a further exclusively narrative history. The history of the Crusades itself and the history of the barbarian kingdoms as the origins of European feudal state structures were both solely meant to provide insight into political-military history. Even in the multiple chapters on the European presence in the East and West Indies no mention is made of progress, civilisation or culture; Verburg only discusses the wars waged with the natives and amongst competing European countries.[42] Rather than writing a European history of progress in commerce, culture and manners, Suikers and Verburg's universal history thus remained a fundamentally narrative history, a history that taught by examples.[43]

Predestined progress: Johannes Martinet's world history (1780-1788)

In contrast to Suikers's relative anonymity, Johannes Florentius Martinet (1729-1796) was a central figure in the Dutch Enlightenment. He obtained his degree from the University of Leiden, where he had studied the natural sciences and researched the respiratory system of insects. He was active as a Mennonite minister, as a writer and researcher, he was a member of various learned societies and keeper of an extensive correspondence network.[44] He became known, nationally and internationally, for his *Catechism of Nature* which was published between 1777 and 1779 and subsequently reprinted until well into the nineteenth century. Immediately after finishing this work,

41 Verburg, *Algemene geschiedenissen*, vol. III, era VI, chapter XII, 133. Original quote: 'Na het verval der Roomsche mogendheit en de overstrominge van de Westersche delen van Europa door de Noordsche volkeren, was de koophandel tusschen dat werelds deel en Asië genoegzaam afgebroken, totdat de kruisvaarten, om het Heilige Landt aan de ongelovigen te ontweldigen, in de elfde eeu begonnen zynde, aan de Europeërs weder het gezicht en de begeerte gaven tot de kostelykheden van Asië'.

42 Verburg, *Algemene geschiedenissen*, vol. III, era VI, chapter XXII, 253-273; vol. V, era VII, chapter LXVII ff, 217-319; Ibidem, era VIII, XXXIV chapter ff, 388-430.

43 Suikers, *Algemene geschiedenissen*, vol. II, era III, chapter VII, 49-50.

44 Paasman, 'Verloren in een zee van wonderen', 97-105; Paasman, *J.F. Martinet*, passim.

Martinet published a nine-volume *History of the World* at Johannes Allart in Amsterdam between 1780 and 1788. This world history had the same objective as his *Catechism*, and indeed as his entire oeuvre, which was aimed at a rigorous defence of the compatibility of Christian belief and natural science, of reason and revelation.[45] In the opening paragraphs of his world history, Martinet also deliberately grouped this work with his previous *Catechism of Nature* and the Bible: taken together, these works would provide the reader with insight into God's Word, Creation and Deeds.[46]

The main objective of Martinet's world history was thus to understand God's glorious design for mankind and to place the Dutch Republic and Europe within this providential history. This goal was complemented by a simultaneous attack on deism, mostly through a severe critique of Voltaire, a beloved target in the Dutch Enlightenment, whose work Martinet considered the epitome of deist 'freethinking'.[47] In addition to this defence of Protestant belief against freethinkers, Martinet's world history was also profoundly shaped by its educational purposes. Written as a dialogue between a teacher and a student, it was dedicated to the children of Stadtholder Willem V and functioned simultaneously as a mirror-for-princes, containing many individual *exempla*. Martinet had moreover no compunction about advocating his personal views, being more favourable towards a political alliance with France than to an alliance with England and using history to prove his point.[48]

Although six decades separated Martinet's and Suikers's world histories, it is striking how closely their formal structures still resembled one another. For example, Martinet still recounted profane history and sacred history in separate sections, although he restricted his history of the church to an exclusively national account. Geographically, he also placed the emphasis on European history. The chronological organisation was similar as well, although Martinet was less precise; he rounded off his division of periods to full years instead of providing the exact number of years as Suikers did. There was also a marked difference between Martinet's chronology of Old and New history. In the period before Christ Martinet retained the subdivision into smaller epochs marked by significant historical events such as the Deluge and the founding of Rome. However, in the period after Christ he diverged

45 Paasman, *J.F. Martinet*, 45-65.

46 Martinet, *Historie der Waereld*, vol. I, 14-15.

47 Suitably, Martinet launched his attack in his chapter on the history of China, as a critical commentary on Voltaire's argument in *Essai sur les moeurs* that a history of civilisation should start with China. Ibidem, vol. V, 376-425.

48 See for an example: Ibidem, vol. VI, 481.

from Suikers's format by slicing it up into six epochs based on a more neutral division by century, with the last two epochs loosely coinciding with the split between medieval history and *Neuzeit* around 1500.[49] Furthermore, chronology was no longer the determining factor in the organisation of the chapters on profane history; instead, Martinet structured this section geographically, recounting the complete history of a people or a country in one single chapter.[50] Overall, Martinet's approach made chronology a less rigid feature of his world history, as he did not engage in debates on chronology, nor include years in the margins.

In addition to Martinet's increasing emphasis on geography as an organising principle for his material, there are also marked differences between the actual content of Martinet's and Suikers's works. Martinet incorporated three new elements into his world history that had been formulated in philosophical history from the 1740s onwards: the idea of progress, the discovery of society as a historical subject, and the focus on historical explanations. We could therefore identify his work as a world history in the sense employed by Van der Zande in his study of eighteenth-century German world histories: as a history in which completeness does not depend on covering the whole of geography or chronology, but on the presentation of a single perspective that was often synonymous with a history of European progress.[51] However, at the same time Martinet revived and strengthened the old Christian aspirations of universal history by revealing that Providence was at work in sacred as well as profane history. And what his close scrutiny of God's Design for mankind revealed above all was Europe's remarkable path towards civilisation. Martinet's view of world history can therefore be best described as a combination of progress and providence - or predestined progress.

This focus on European history was not exceptional; on the contrary, the ‘why’ of Europe's progress became the key question in Enlightenment historical thought. It partially stemmed from methodological alterations within the genre, which were formulated as a solution to the criticism aimed at the enormously popular 65-volume *Universal History* (1736-1765), the European-wide project that surpassed even Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* in

49 See for the chronology BC: Ibidem, vol. I, 47-53. See for the chronology AD: Ibidem, vol. III, 4-12. Similar to Suikers, Martinet followed the Hebrew instead of the Greek Septuagint Biblical translation, resulting in a period of roughly 1,650 years between Creation and the Deluge. See for the increasing importance of centuries in organising historical works: Blaas, ‘Het paradigma van de eeuwwende’, 45-53.

50 See for a quick overview the ‘Lyst der zamenspraaken in de verkorte historie der waereld’ at the beginning of vol. IX.

51 Van der Zande, ‘De universele geschiedenis’, 119-121.

scope and length.[52] Because the objective of the contributors to the *Universal History* had been to write a 'true' universal history, including all known nations and peoples in the world, and to incorporate the multiple opinions of learned debates as a way of countering political and religious bias, it had lacked coherence, resulting in a large number of isolated histories which were bound together solely by chronology. This methodological problem was discussed in Germany where Johann Christoph Gatterer and August Ludwig Schlözer of Göttingen University both developed methods to achieve coherence in world history, the former in his *Vom historischen Plan* (1767) and the latter in *Vorstellung seiner Universal-historie* (1772). Both presented history as a collective singular (*Kollektivsingular*) with mankind at its centre, but their decision to view world history from a single perspective led to the gradual exclusion of smaller, non-European nations and peoples.[53]

Rather than viewing it as an intellectual development from within, some contemporary historians of the Enlightenment have based their explanation for this emphasis on European history on a more social, and even psychological, approach. O'Brien, Pocock and Edelstein have traced the construction of a 'Narrative of Enlightenment' or 'enlightened narrative' in France, Scotland and England as the eighteenth-century intellectuals' response to a key question in the Enlightenment: how had the supposedly 'enlightened' present of Europe - as seen in historical and geographical comparison - come about? The resulting enlightened narrative connected European countries in a linear history of the 'human spirit' from antiquity, through the barbarous Middle Ages, to the progress of the scientific revolution and finally to the enlightened present in which seventeenth-century knowledge was perceived as increasingly benefiting society as a whole.[54] This story was not only clearly set in time, but also in space by comparing European nations to non-European and supposedly less 'civilised' nations and peoples. While Edelstein sees this idea of progress as originating in the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, Michael C. Carhart has contended that the 'why Europe' question was intimately connected with the question of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, both of which, he argues, were caused by fear. The decline and fall seemed to hold frightening messages for Europe's future and contemporaries wanted to know whether Europe was part of a linear or cyclical history. Put

52 Abbattista, 'The English *Universal History*', 103-108. The Dutch were the first to translate these volumes for their own market: Van der Zande, 'De universele geschiedenis', 108-109.

53 Van der Zande, 'De universele geschiedenis', 119-121; Ibidem, 'De cultuur van de geschiedenis', 278-282.

54 O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment*, passim; Pocock, *Barbarism and religion*, 5 vols., passim; Edelstein, *The Enlightenment*, passim.

another way, were Europeans progressing towards a state of perfection or were they doomed to follow the ancients and inevitably decline and fall?[55]

Martinet's world history not only ticked most boxes of the enlightened narrative's key components, but also meaningfully connected these elements into one narrative of European history.[56] For example, Martinet discussed how the 'barbaric' Crusades had paradoxically benefited Europe. They had put Europeans in touch with Italian commerce and ships, with knowledge from Asia and Greece, and with wealth from Constantinople. The invention and proper use of the compass had enabled Europeans to revive international commerce and this commerce had, in turn, civilised their rude manners.[57] Because Europeans could only maintain trade with China, Japan or the Indies if they had the proper wares to sell, commerce led to the development of specialised labour and a general blossoming of the arts and sciences. European governments then realised that in order to achieve wealth and power they should encourage such specialised labour and the arts and sciences - which ultimately led to the dissolution of Europe's feudal system because commerce and learning could only flourish in the absence of an arbitrary government.[58] As Martinet briefly described the Europe of commerce and manners of his day: 'Today, commerce is the soul of everything'.[59]

However, it would be misleading to characterise Martinet's view of history as fundamentally progressive. Providence constituted the essence of his world history, ultimately determining not only his historiographical explanations, but also restricting his narrative of progress to Europe, instead of perceiving it as a universal possibility. If we consider Martinet's explanations we see that in his world history God remained an ever-present force - even more than in the work of his key source William Robertson - actively involved in every small detail.[60] Consequently, Martinet consistently reasoned backwards in explaining historical events. Why had something happened? Because God had intended it to happen. All divine action was in addition considered just, whether it entailed the brutal death of a tyrannical ruler or the flourishing

55 Carhart and Robertson, 'The Enlightenments of J.G.A. Pocock', 130.

56 On a national level, Martinet also noted a general development from 'rude' to 'civilised' occurring in all European nations, similar to conjectural history as we shall see in Stuart's work - however, for Martinet Genesis remained the truth and therefore a true conjectural history was impossible. For example, see his Greek history: Martinet, *Historie der Waereld*, vol. II, 4-18. In addition, while Martinet diagnosed many separate European countries with decline - the Dutch Republic, Spain, Venice - he observed progress in the history of Europe overall.

57 Ibidem, vol. VI, 125; vol. IV, 334-343; vol. VI, 127.

58 Ibidem, vol. I, 25-26, 33; vol. V, 447-449.

59 Ibidem, vol. V, 449. Original quote: 'Dus is de Handel thans de ziel van alles'.

60 Ibidem, vol. I, 15.

of classical knowledge in Western Europe after the fall of Constantinople.[61] Nevertheless, God possessed multiple means to achieve his goals, so Martinet's explanations also included secular, well-known causes, resulting in a sort of 'double layering' of explanations: the simultaneous provision of secular as well as providential causes for historical progress and events.

Take for example his explanation for the decline and fall of the Roman empire. Similar to Suikers, Martinet summed up different causes: the Gracchus brothers as the origin of internal discord and civic violence; the imperial overstretch that left the soldiers feeling estranged from their country and instead pledging allegiance to their commanders; the individual ambition for high command; the static laws which were unsuited to the needs of a large empire; external pressures from barbarian invasions; and the decline of virtue.[62] However, ultimately the rise, decline and fall of the Roman Empire were all dictated by Providence. God had used the Romans to reconnect mankind to prepare a swift spread of the gospel, and as a scourge for sinful mankind. After they had fulfilled their function in God's divine plan and they had declined in virtue themselves, God turned them against each other, and thus to ruin.[63] While the rise, decline and fall of the Roman Empire were thus part of Providence, the actual fall was the combined result of secular causes such as internal strife, corruption of virtue and external pressures from barbaric invasions.[64]

Since God determined the rise and fall of nations and empires, it was also He who had enabled European progress. The progress that Martinet discerned in the history of Europe was therefore not a universal possibility for mankind or the realisation of its innate potential, but once again the work of Providence. As he had done in his *Catechism of Nature*, Martinet sketched a 'great chain of being' in which mankind was placed in the order between animals and angels.[65] According to this view, mankind was considered a unity, but not equal. In the act of Creation, God had consciously allocated distinct natural resources to the various regions of the world, thus ensuring the need for international contact and commerce and so safeguarding a spread of the gospel.[66] Moreover, He had allotted man the mental and physical capacities to employ these resources and make them thrive. However, in this preordained arrangement, countries, nations and individuals had also been *differently* allotted

61 Ibidem, vol. IX, 9-10; vol. II, 117.
62 Ibidem, vol. I, 424-430.
63 Ibidem, vol. III, 17. Before Rome, Egypt had fulfilled that same task: Ibidem, vol. I, 117.
64 Ibidem, vol. II, 305-311, 423-428.
65 Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 183 ff.; Coomans, 'Genesis en geschiedenis', 29-41.
66 Martinet, *Historie der Waereld*, vol. I, 23-45.

in those capacities and resources. And it is this element that ultimately drives Martinet to confine the narrative of progress in his world history to Europe. For example, while Martinet could perceive a general development from ‘rude’ to ‘civilised’ for all individual European nations, he could not conceive of the same possibility being available to the Americans. Indeed, Martinet described their primitive state as only slightly above that of animals, naming reason as the only formal difference and seeing no direct possibility for development.[67] For Martinet, progress was not universal, but predestined; not achieved by man, but determined by God. In Martinet's world history the idea of progress therefore crystallized into a Eurocentric view of the world in which non-European, non-Christian parts of the world were mostly regarded with disdain or pity - their potential for progress depending solely on the probability of their being touched by the evangelical light.[68] Of course, this also meant that the future progress of Europe was in no way guaranteed; only by staying on the correct path of honouring God could the continent maintain its superior status.

It is vital that we do not overlook the omnipresent political and humanist content of Martinet's world history. Progress was not only achieved by grand processes such as commerce, but also by individuals, often benevolent rulers who fulfil in Martinet's work the double function of executors of God's design and instructive *exempla* for the Stadtholder's children.[69] And while all chapters in his world history end with an overview of a nation's customs, commerce, and arts and sciences, chronological accounts of political and military history constitute by far the lengthiest sections in his chapters. For example, Martinet might state that a ‘dry’ political account was less useful in understanding a nation than an analysis of its culture or a sketch of its character, to subsequently embark on a 109-page roll call of all the counts in Dutch history.[70] Still, the concept of civilisation clearly formed an important part of Martinet's philosophy of history. He even underscored the importance of culture and civilisation by including it in his interpretation of the Mosaic account, thus making it the direct product of God's will. After elaborately praising Moses as a historian, Martinet emphasised God's wise decision in choosing Noah to repopulate the world by pointing out Noah's cultural knowledge, thus underlining the justness of Providence by means of a cultural argument: ‘Even more so, he [Noah] needed to have lived in the Old World for a long time, to be able to transfer

67 Ibidem, vol. IX, 123-124, 176-177.
68 For example, the Chinese were not likely to be receptive to the evangelical light. Ibidem, vol. V, 425.
69 See for one of many examples: Ibidem, vol. I, 398-399.
70 Ibidem, vol. VIII, 35-144.

the knowledge of the arts and sciences, gained from his own experiences, from the first world to the second. God wanted to save the second world, which was destined to last, from declining into the first world's ignorance and barbarity'.[71] That Martinet's religious view of progress and civilisation could never evolve into a conjectural history in which mankind universally developed from hunter-gatherer to members of a commercial society, from rude to civilised, had much to do with his Biblical understanding. Because the Mosaic account constituted the truth for Martinet, he maintained that men in the earliest societies had lived off agriculture and animal husbandry.[72] It was only in Stuart's work that Genesis truly became obsolete as a historical source for the origins of mankind and an idea of universal progress could emerge.

Universal progress: Martinus Stuart's history of mankind (1802-1807)

Like Martinet, Stuart (1765-1826) was a well-known figure in the Dutch Republic. He was actively - although in the end unsuccessfully - involved in the attempt to establish a united Protestant church shortly after the Batavian Revolution in 1795 and was beloved for his preaching as a Remonstrant minister. He also achieved fame with his historical writings, especially his 30-volume *Roman Histories* (1793-1810). In 1815, Stuart was named Historiographer Royal of Willem I's kingdom and it was as such that he wrote the *Annals for the Kingdom of the Netherlands* (1818-1826). Besides history, Stuart's interests also included ethnography, an interest that he explored in his *Man, as he Lives in the Known Parts of the World*, which I will consider next.[73]

Like Martinet's world history, this work was published by Johannes Allart in Amsterdam between 1802 and 1807. Technically it was not a world history, but an ethnographic series. Originally his series was meant to cover the entire world, but the project was never finished because the illustrator Jacques Kuyper passed away in 1808.[74] As it is, it covers Australia, New Zealand, America and Africa. Stuart's main sources of information were eighteenth-century travel accounts; his objective was to write a descriptive compilation of all the peoples in the world, not a historical account. The series therefore consisted of geographically structured 'snapshots' of peoples, describing their

71 Ibidem, vol. I, 79. Original Dutch quote: 'Nog meer, hy [Noach] moest lang in de oude Waereld geleefd hebben, om de kennis van Konsten en Weetenschappen met zyne Ondervindingen, uit die eerste in de tweede Waereld over te brengen. God wilde, dat deeze tweede, die blyven moest, niet vervallen zou in de nu heerschende onkunde en onbeschaafdheid'.

72 In this idea Martinet was no exception. See for example: Sebastiani, 'Conjectural History vs. the Bible', 51-62.

73 Zilverberg, 'Martinus Stuart', 409-410.

74 Zilverberg, 'Martinus Stuart', 409-410.

current state of civilization - their modes of subsistence, customs and religious and political organisation. However, the overall structure of the work still amounted to a temporal view of society's historical development. The static descriptions were intentionally arranged in accordance with civilisation's consecutive stages from ‘rude’ to ‘civilised’. The series started with the lowest stage of civilisation in New Zealand and Australia, then turned to America and Africa, to Asia, and finally to Europe.[75]

Stuart's series used a well-known expedient of Enlightenment historical thought: the four stages theory, also called conjectural history.[76] In his book *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* Ronald Meek has masterfully traced the coming about of this fully secularized, socio-economic four stages theory as formulated in the 1750s by Adam Smith and Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot. This theory saw the mode of subsistence as the determining factor in the development of mankind and man as progressing through four consecutive stages: from hunter-gatherer to pastoral, agricultural and commercial being.[77] It was postulated that man ‘not only *made himself* and his institutions: he and his institutions in an important sense *were themselves made* by the circumstances in which from time to time and from place to place he happened to find himself’.[78] The mode of subsistence had causal primacy; as the mode of subsistence varied, so would society's laws and policy. This narrative of historical development was often accompanied by the belief that mankind had evolved from ‘savagery’ to ‘civilisation’.

Obviously, this four stages theory made the use of chronology, which had been such an essential component of world history, entirely redundant. After Genesis had increasingly lost its authority as a source for the origins of mankind, historians turned to geographical comparisons in their search for the earliest history of man, a period from which practically no written sources had survived.[79] American Indians or Australian natives functioned therefore as a geographical counterpoint which allowed one to glimpse the beginnings of a universal historical development. The ‘savage’ nations, as seen from the viewpoint of the supposedly ‘civilised’ Europeans, became synonymous with mankind's origins. Conjectural history was thus founded on geographical comparison, on the perceived differences between Europe and other continents, but it was afterwards also applied to the entire world to measure a nation's progress. Siep Stuurman aptly summarises this circular argument as follows:

75 Stuart, *De Mensch*, vol. I, 1-100.
76 Cheng, *The Plain*, 59-60; Wright, ‘Historical Thought’, 130.
77 Meek, *Social Science*, 1-2, 68. Wright, ‘Historical Thought’, 130.
78 Meek, *Social Science*, 1.
79 Stuurman, ‘Tijd en ruimte in de Verlichting’, 89.

‘Logically speaking the argument was based on circular reasoning: why are the American Indians primitive? - because they live like our earliest ancestors. How do we know how our ancestors lived? - by observing the American Indian way of living’.[80] Because in every moment different peoples could be living in differing degrees of civilisation, the historical development of society was disconnected from chronology and elevated to a theory of universal progress. This theory could then be used at any time to determine in which stage a people was currently living. Therefore, in Stuart's work geography had become the organising principle; every people was studied separately to determine their current state of civilisation. If we include Van der Zande's classification of German world histories, Stuart's work can therefore be categorised as a history of mankind, that is the development of the genre of world history into a combined comparative and conjectural approach to study the evolving nature of man. Thus, the idea of progress that in Martinet's work had been restricted to a European history of progress in manners grew in Stuart's work into a theory of progress that was universally applicable to mankind and to the entirety of society.[81]

The goal of Stuart's series was to ‘regard man as he lives, not as he is’ because the latter would require omniscient knowledge of man, which was God's prerogative.[82] Stuart's central premise was the unity of mankind despite its many obvious differences and variations. However, Stuart contended that to argue this premise from a Biblical point of view, i.e. to state that mankind descended from one pair of humans, was not sufficient.[83] Instead, he united mankind on the basis of the possession of reason, much like Martinet had done. Although differences in civilisation existed, Stuart stated,

> everywhere, man, regardless of how rude, ignorant, yes even animalistic he may be, he will rule the animals that surround him [...]; still, the enlightened and civilised man, who measures the distance to the stars, [...], who uses the laws of nature, being his own ruler on earth, to his own benefit, infinitely more surpasses the rude man of nature than the latter surpasses the animals that surround him.[84]

80 Ibidem, 89. Original quote: ‘Logisch gesproken berustte het geheel op een cirkelredenering: Waarom zijn de Amerikanen primitief? - omdat ze leven zoals onze verre voorouders. Hoe weten we hoe onze verre voorouders leefden? - door de levenswijze van de Amerikanen te observeren’.

81 Van der Zande, ‘de universele geschiedenis’, 119-121.

82 Stuart, *De Mensch*, vol. I, 1-2.

83 Ibidem, vol. I, 61-62.

84 Ibidem, vol. I, 9-10. See also: 96-97. Original quote: ‘de verlichte en beschaafde mensch, die de afstanden der sterren meet, zich op den rug der golven een zeker spoor teekent, en de wetten der natuur, als eigen wetgever op aarde, ten eigene baate doet werken, [gaat] oneindig meer den ruwen natuurmensch te boven [...], dan deze de dieren, dien hij om zich heeft’.

Contrary to Martinet, however, Stuart held a more positive view of mankind and did not reproduce a version of the chain of being. Because of his reason, every man harboured the potential for progress, which animals did not. Stuart therefore aimed to observe man as he lived around the world, including all the differences in his physical appearance and in his way of life, customs and manners, to achieve a higher goal: to gain knowledge of what man is in his natural predisposition, and what he can become through civilisation - hence, the organisation of the work from 'rude' to 'civilised' peoples.[85] Stuart thus wrote the series mainly in a tradition of moral philosophy; his overview aimed at an advancement of universal, moral knowledge. In that way, the degree of civilisation of every people could be measured according to the same criteria.

Stuart determined a people's progress on the basis of a fixed set of criteria, although these criteria could vary, depending on the content of the travel journals used. However, we do encounter the same parameters in his work: the treatment of women; the presence or absence of cannibalism; mode of subsistence; religious and political customs, such as property, laws and superstition; the level of arts and sciences, like knowledge of metallurgy and complexity of language; or specific character traits: is a people industrious or lazy, curious or indifferent? Overall, European civilisation functioned as the explicit or implicit yardstick for all non-European nations. Stuart treated even the smallest details in terms of the different degrees of civilisation. For example, in his description of Otaheite [Tahiti] Stuart describes their custom of sacrificing humans in the name of their Gods. 'Horrific' as this practice is, he says, it is already less 'savage' than their previous custom of 'devouring' their enemies. Human sacrifice was thus an 'advancement' because it was a degree more civilised than the most savage practice of cannibalism.[86] It is illuminating in this respect to analyse Stuart's comments on mankind's supposedly original state which - needless to say - could no longer be explained by the Mosaic account. Stuart thus answered this temporal question into mankind's original state on the basis of geographical comparison, analogous to the intertwining of space and time in conjectural theory. Stuart viewed the natives in the recently explored regions of Australia and Tasmania as the prime examples of mankind's most 'savage' state. 'This vast island [Tasmania] [...], is crucial for our objective, in that it will show us a People in whom we, as far as their state of society is concerned, find

85 Ibidem, vol. I, 1-2.
86 Ibidem, vol. I, 151-153.

Man as he probably must have lived originally and before any degree of civilisation'.[87]

What constituted mankind's original state? In answering this question, Stuart closely followed conjectural history, contending that the lowest stage in mankind was its existence as hunter-gatherer. After his assertion that the Tasmanians and Australians lived in 'total nakedness', he immediately turned to their mode of subsistence. Living as hunter-gatherers, these natives knew no agriculture and subsisted solely on what nature provided them.[88] In their nomadic existence, they found shelter in accordance with their natural surroundings as well. The Tasmanians, for example, either hollowed out a tree, created a small shelter from branches or just slept beneath the open skies.[89] However, to truly qualify as a four stages theory, the mode of subsistence should also determine the social, political and religious organisation of society. Because Stuart's series aimed at a descriptive inventory, it is difficult to determine whether the mode of subsistence was also seen as the main cause of their societal arrangements. Stuart did consistently differentiate between hunter-gatherers, shepherds and farmers throughout his work, but how all the different societal elements precisely relate to one another is uncertain.

Furthermore, conjectural history does not postulate an a priori explanation for transitions from one stage to another. So how do 'savage' peoples evolve into 'civilised' nations? Again, Stuart's work is essentially descriptive, but small personal remarks can be found scattered throughout his series. In his discussion of the Tasmanians and Australians, for example, Stuart points out that without external input it took people centuries to progress even to a small degree.[90] Moreover, it was implied that the main cause of progress was contact with other nations, which was mostly realised by commercial dealings. Needless to say, such beneficial contact was almost always unilateral with Europeans enriching the way of life of

87 Ibidem, vol. II, 210: 'Dit uitgestrekte Eiland [...], is alzins belangrijk voor ons oogmerk, dar het ons Menschen doet kennen, in welken wij, wat derzelver maatschaplijken staat betreft, den Mensch wedervinden, zoo als hij oorspronglijk en voor alle beschaaving schijnt geweest te moeten zijn'.

88 Ibidem, vol. III, 18-20, 24, 32-33; vol. II, 218-219, 226. Though the Tasmanians probably hunted occasionally, Stuart says, they lived mainly from the fruit, vegetables and scallops they gathered.

89 Ibidem, vol. II, 222. The accommodation of the Australians was also adapted to their nomadic existence. In addition to making use of hollowed out trees, they built simple dwellings by constructing 'beehive- or basket-like' huts from flexible branches which were stuck into the ground and then covered with grass and leaves. These huts could also be found grouped together, resembling a small village. They were frequently found empty in the forest, indicating that these dwellings were labour extensive so that the nomadic Australians could build them anew wherever they moved to. Ibidem, vol. III, 21-22.

90 Ibidem, vol. III, 14-15.

non-European peoples by providing expert knowledge and manufactured products. Thus, Stuart could only explain the use of iron by the natives of the southern Sandwich Islands by assuming some earlier, unknown contact with Europeans.[91] However, the opposite was possible as well. Sometimes a people regressed because of contact with Europe. The 'Houzouanas' in Southern Africa were set back from husbandry to a hunter-gatherer existence because of their distorted relationship with European planters.[92] Like Martinet's world history, progress was in Stuart's work never an inevitable, linear development; history had shown its cyclical course and regression was always a possibility.[93]

Stuart also mentioned several necessary conditions to enable and safeguard progress, most of all the significance of political freedom. The despotic rule in Egypt and Morocco served as examples of how political 'slavery' could obstruct progress. The Egyptians, for example, lived in a society that had reached a high degree of civilisation, but their arts and sciences had not due to their laziness. Stuart explained this state of mind from the oppression of Egypt's government. The apathy of the Egyptians, he argues, could be lifted when a more stimulating government would rule; then, people could devote their time to developing their natural, predisposed talents, which would lead to a general blooming of the arts and sciences.[94] Conversely, the 'Kaffers', a people who lived in southern Africa, were still rude in many ways - as Stuart demonstrated by pointing to the disproportionate amount of work done by women and their meagre achievements in the arts and sciences. However, they still surpassed other rude nations because their political organisation ensured the freedom of the natives, who could therefore fully develop their innate potential.[95] The absence of war and of an arbitrary government were thus necessary preconditions for progress. Seen from this perspective, although Stuart adopted multiple elements of conjectural history, he limited the socio-economic viewpoint by drawing attention to the importance of civic government in the historical development of society. Moreover, unlike Martinet who consistently underlined European exceptionalism, Stuart's universal notion of progress also presupposed a more bleak view of civilisation. In his discussion of the Tasmanian people he stated that '[our Brother's] simpleness keeps him infinitely closer to a state

91 Ibidem, vol. I, 181.
92 Ibidem, vol. V, 128-133.
93 Similar ideas were also expressed in France, see for example: Vyverberg, *Historical pessimism*, passim.
94 Stuart, *De Mensch*, vol. VI, 214-215.
95 Ibidem, vol. V, 160-169.

of pure innocence than civility and luxury will ever allow their children to return to'.[96]

Conclusion

In this article, I have attempted to place the three eighteenth-century Dutch world histories into a broader European perspective and analyse how the contributions to the genre changed throughout the Enlightenment period. While there are various ways to do this, I have chosen to do so mainly by comparing them to philosophical history. While this approach has been helpful to identify and analyse changes in our world histories - such as the development of historical explanations, the idea of progress and the broadening of the historical subject to include civilisation, commerce and manners - it also conceals certain aspects. For example, the historiography of philosophical history is usually accompanied by secularist claims, which would leave no room for Martinet's world history. A more thorough comparison with key publications in 'philosophical history', such as Robertson's *History of America* and Voltaire's *Essai sur les Moeurs*, could help in better placing Martinet's world history and his idea of predestined progress. In addition, I have compared the Dutch case to similar developments in the genre in Germany where methodological changes also closely followed 'philosophical' methods. In the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic the genre of world history seems to have roughly followed the development that Van der Zande has observed in German world histories: from universal history to world history to a history of mankind. We should always remember, however, that history had yet to become a discipline and that in the genre of world history the most disparate projects could be realised, to such an extent that their only common denominator would be their global perspective.

Another more pragmatic way of framing the historiographical development epitomised by Suikers's, Martinet's and Stuart's world histories - and certainly one closer to the sources themselves - would be to consider them in terms of a shift from chronology to geography. In Suikers's world history, chronology still reigned supreme: it not only provided the framework for the history, but also functioned as the sole thread that brought all separate histories together. This chronological framework nicely fitted Suiker's narrative history of political and military events, subjects that were relatively easy to arrange

96 Ibidem, vol. II, 210. Partial translation of original quote: '[...] en zoo als wij hem echter recht hartlijk als onzen Broeder kunnen liefhebben, daar zijne eenvouwdigheid hem oneindig nader bij den staat eener zuivere onschuld houdt, dan de beschaafdheid en weelde haare kinders immer vergunnen tot denzelven terug te keeren'.

according to precise chronology, unlike the history of commerce and manners. While Martinet kept the formal Biblical 6,000-year chronology, his focus had shifted to geography as the organising principle of his material. Although the history before Christ was still arranged according to the Mosaic account and structured around important historical events, he arranged the history after Christ in a more neutral division into centuries and divided the chapters geographically. Providence had replaced chronology as the key feature of the work and regained its traditional role as the principal guide of world history, although this providential history ultimately told an 'enlightened' narrative of progress. Martinet thus reconciled philosophical history with his religious convictions by 'double layering' his explanations, providing both secular and providential causes for historical events. In Stuart's work chronology had completely disappeared; it was now geography that structured the content, although geography as Stuart used it was - as we have seen - still shaped by time and evolution.

My enquiry in this article has been only a first step in giving more context to the persistent historiographical claim of an exclusive nationalist focus in eighteenth-century Dutch historiography. The current analysis could be enriched by including Dutch translations of foreign world histories - as Van der Zande has done so well for the Dutch translation of the *Universal History* - historical works on individual non-European nations and Latin world histories. Although my enquiry is restricted to these three Dutch world histories, it shows that a world perspective was still considered valid in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic. Moreover, the eighteenth-century Dutch men of letters Martinet and Stuart structured their works around the idea of progress - a finding that may enrich our understanding of the Dutch Enlightenment as well.

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Circles of desire and the corruption of virtue: the historical thought of Cornelis Zillesen (1736-1828)

Jan Rotmans

The relationship between classical and enlightened ideas in eighteenth-century Dutch political discourse has been studied extensively, but their uneasy coexistence in historical thought remains largely unexplored. This article focuses on the latter by analyzing the historical thought of Cornelis Zillesen (1736-1828), one of the most prominent and prolific Dutch philosophical historians. A study of his work reveals that Zillesen combines a classical image of inevitable republican decline with an enlightened narrative of the development of commerce and civilization in Europe. Cyclical and linear visions of historical development are inconsistently combined throughout Zillesen's oeuvre, before as well as after the eighteenth-century revolutions. Considering the conceptual tension between classical and enlightened images of history in his work, this article raises questions about the modernity of Dutch enlightened historical thought.

'Peoples suffer the same fate as dynasties, undergoing endless alternations of prosperity and adversity, of rise and fall. Happiness follows virtue and activity, whereas peoples and dynasties that are corrupted by wealth and luxury find in them their measure of humiliation'.[1] Such a cyclical image of historical development occupies a central place in the work of Cornelis Zillesen, one of the most prominent Dutch philosophical historians. He inconsistently combines the classical image of inevitable decline with enlightened confidence in the course of history. 'All stages of civilization and further enlightenment bring man closer and closer to greater perfection, and are encouragements to perfect his temporary and eternal happiness'.[2] While the uneasy tension between classical and enlightened ideas in Dutch political discourse has been studied, their coexistence in Dutch historical thought remains unexplored.[3] The latter is approached here through a study of Zillesen's oeuvre, which is exceptionally voluminous. His written legacy consists of thousands of pages:

1 Zillesen, *Onderzoek der Oorzaaken*, vol. III, 288-289. 'Het is met de volken als met de geslachten, zij ondergaan geduurige afwisselingen van voor en tegenspoed, van op en ondergang. Het geluk volgt de deugd en werkzaamheid, daar in tegendeel, volken en geslachten, door rijkdom en weelde bedorven, in het zelve de trap van hun verneedering vinden'.

2 Zillesen, *Geschiedenis der Vereenigde Nederlanden*, vol. II, 263-264. 'Iedere trap van beschaving en meerder verlichting brengt den mensch al nader en nader tot eene grooter volkomenheid, en zijn spoorslagen om zijn tijdelijk en eeuwig geluk te volmaken'.

3 Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme*; Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen*; Velema, *Republicans*.

two six-volume histories and several treatises on a wide range of topics, mainly published in the last two decades of the eighteenth century.[4] While historians often briefly mention Zillesen, his work has never been analyzed at length.[5] Whatever the reason may be for his relative obscurity, studying his work is not merely of antiquarian interest. This article analyzes the historical consciousness of Zillesen in order to question the birth of a modern Dutch historical consciousness at the revolutionary end of the eighteenth century. After a brief introduction of the theoretical framework, Zillesen's thought will be analyzed.

A modern historical consciousness?

The eighteenth-century revolutions are commonly understood as the origin of a modern historical consciousness that rigorously separates the past from the present. Peter Fritzsche, for example, claims that men were 'stranded in the present' after the French Revolution.[6] This thesis owes much to the work of Reinhart Koselleck, who famously argues that experiences could no longer determine expectations from 1789 onwards.[7] A cyclical image of historical development exists in his opinion if experiences overlap with expectations. Their divergence in the second half of the eighteenth century rather results in an enlightened, linear image, through which the fundamentally new becomes imaginable or even inevitable. According to Koselleck, this development plays a central role in the rise of modernity.[8] A problem with his influential position is its apparent incompatibility with the importance of classical-republican ideas at the end of the eighteenth century. John Pocock convincingly shows in *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975) that the classical-republican discourse is characterized by virtue and its corruption.[9] This results in a cyclical

4 Little is known about Zillesen's life. Even the year of his birth remains unknown. Here I follow the in memoriam published immediately after his death in *Algemeene Konst- en Letter-bode* 15 (4-4-1828) 227-228. Also see: Haitsma Mulier and Van der Lem, *Repertorium van geschiedschrijvers in Nederland*, 455-456; Elias, *Bijdrage tot de kennis van de historiographie*, 58-69.

5 Velema, *Republicans*, 78, n. 7.

6 Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present*.

7 The dichotomy between experiences and expectations as the defining feature of modernity is analyzed in: Koselleck, '"Space of Experience" and "Horizon of Expectation"', 255-275. Also see the essay 'Historical Criteria of the Modern Concept of Revolution' in the same volume on the French Revolution as the moment at which the fundamentally new becomes imaginable through a divergence of experiences and expectations: 43-57.

8 Koselleck, 'The Eighteenth Century as the Beginning of Modernity', 154-169. His claims about the birth of modernity in the second half of the eighteenth century fit in with his larger hypothesis that concepts acquire their modern meaning between 1750-1850, better known as the *Sattelzeit*-hypothesis. It is put forward in: Koselleck, 'Einleitung', in: Brunner, Werner and Koselleck, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, xiii-xxvii. Koselleck's *Sattelzeit* is often taken a point of departure by Dutch historians. For instance: Blaas, *Anachronisme en historisch besef*. 16-28; Van Sas, *De metamorfose van Nederland*, 17-18, 402.

9 Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*.

ONDERZOEK
DER
OORZAAKEN
VAN DE
OPKOMST,
HET
VERVAL EN HERSTEL,
DER VOORNAAMSTE
OUDE EN HEDENDAAGSCHE
VOLKEN.
DOOR
CORNELIS ZILLESEN.

I. DEEL.

Te UTRECHT,
Bij G. VAN DEN BRINK, JANZ.
Stads-drukker en Boekverkoper.
MDCCLXXXI.

Fig. 1: Title page of the first volume of Zillesen's Inquiry (1781).

understanding of historical development, which limits the ability of early-modern thinkers to comprehend fundamental change. A question then arises: is the classical-republican understanding of historical development done away with after the eighteenth-century revolutions?

As this article will argue, the existing historiographical emphasis on conceptual change and contestation in Dutch political discourse obscures the continuity of a conceptual framework in which the cyclical development of history remains inevitable. An overwhelming presence of classical-republican ideas in Dutch political discourse is unsurprising, since the Dutch political system remained republican in nature after the Batavian Revolution of 1795, in which the Dutch Republic is replaced by the Batavian Republic.[10] Changes nonetheless take place, Wyger Velema emphasizes. 'Studying the political discourse of the late eighteenth century Republic [...] is above all discovering discontinuities of meaning within the continuity of political vocabulary'.[11] Despite the fundamental changes that take place in the Dutch intellectual world at the end of the eighteenth century, more continuity exists than is commonly acknowledged in the existing historiography. Especially the enduring relevance of the classical-republican vocabulary, with its cyclical image of history, complicates the idea of the birth of Dutch modernity in this era.[12]

While Velema warns against any understanding of eighteenth-century Dutch political culture as 'modern' because of the continuous importance of classical-republican ideas, a similar warning is appropriate when it comes to interpretations of eighteenth-century Dutch historical consciousness.[13] In the historiographical debate a *historical* consciousness is often conflated with a *modern* historical one.[14] Consequently, not only the Revolution, but also the Enlightenment is mistakenly understood as the origin of a modern historical consciousness. Enlightenment and history were seen as incompatible by historians in the past, but now the Enlightenment's essentially historical nature is emphasized.[15] If a historical consciousness is always modern, and this consciousness indeed arose in the Enlightenment, then the period witnessed the birth of the modern historical consciousness. However, enlightened

10 Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme*; Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen*; Velema, *Republicans*.
11 Velema, *Republicans*, 161.
12 Van Sas, *De metamorfose*.
13 Velema, *Republicans*, 161-162.
14 A version of this argument is presented by Zachary Schiffman, who emphasizes that the idea of the past arises before historicism: Schiffman, *The Birth of the Past*.
15 A recent example is: Edelstein, *The Enlightenment*.

histories are not modern in this sense. Eighteenth-century thinkers may often see themselves as enlightened moderns, as Dan Edelstein notes, but their modernity is quite different from ours.[16] Antiquity plays a central role in their version of modernity, which already implies the existence of a close relationship between enlightened narratives of historical development and classical images of history.[17]

More generally, the identification of a historical consciousness with a modern historical one results in a study of historical ways of thinking that is simultaneously a search for the advent of modernity. This gives rise to a teleological history of the historical consciousness which merely looks for the origins of its modern variant. It leads to the question whether romanticism or historicism, Enlightenment or revolution, or the Renaissance or the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns is the birthplace of the modern historical consciousness. This search for its origins is not a fruitful enterprise, as Brecht Deseure and Judith Pollmann stress: 'we need to think less in terms of linear and irreversible changes [...] and instead be aware that different ways of negotiating the past, or modes of thinking about it, can coexist, not just in societies but indeed in individuals'.[18] Their coexistence thus undermines any neat schematization of the history of the historical consciousness.[19]

An analysis of Zillesen's work reveals that linear and cyclical images of historical development coexist in an uneasy tension throughout the final decades of the eighteenth century.[20] These images are theoretically inconsistent, because the former allow for fundamental change, while the latter deny this possibility. Their coexistence is nonetheless explainable, since the Dutch Republic was an enlightened republic in decline, at least in the perception of eighteenth-century commentators. As Niek van Sas argues, the Dutch Enlightenment is characterized by confidence in the ability of men to improve their condition as well as an emphasis on the economic, political

16 Ibidem, 1. Also see: Edelstein, 'The Classical Turn in Enlightenment Studies', 61-71; Velema, 'Oude waarheden', 229-246.

17 Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, vol. II; Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, vol. III. The importance of cyclical notions in Enlightenment historiography is noted in: Wright, 'Historical Thought in the Era of the Enlightenment', 123-142; Breisach, *Historiography*, 210-214. The importance of Antiquity in the eighteenth-century Republic is analyzed from several perspectives in: Raat, Velema and Baar-De Weerd, *De Oudheid in de Achttiende Eeuw/Classical Antiquity in the Eighteenth Century*. For the present article two contributions are especially relevant: Velema, 'Antiquity and Modernity in the Eighteenth Century', 17-29; Rutjes, 'Niet geheel applicabel op deze tijd', 75-86. Also see: Velema, *Omstreden Oudheid*; Velema, 'Conversations with the Classics', 415-438.

18 Deseure and Pollmann, 'The Experience of Rupture and the History of Memory', 315-329, esp. 329.

19 Koselleck is far from the only historian to develop such an understanding. Another influential example is: Hartog, *Régimes d'historicité*.

20 That enlightened as well as cyclical views existed together in his work is mentioned but not elaborated upon by Haitsma Mulier in: 'Between Humanism and Enlightenment', 170-187, esp. 186.

and moral decline of the Netherlands.[21] Against that ambiguous background, Zillesen develops a geometric model that explains the development of mankind, especially the progress of European civilization. That relatively linear image of historical development clashes with the indispensable role of virtues in politics and their inevitable corruption, which invites a cyclical image. After briefly introducing Zillesen's work, this article analyzes these two images of historical development. As will become clear, there is continuity in his ideas about historical development, even though his political ideas undergo radical change.

Continuity in change: the case of Zillesen

Zillesen was a land measurer, tax collector and inventor. He was not university-educated.[22] As a typical enlightened thinker, Zillesen participated enthusiastically in learned societies such as the Holland Society of Science in Haarlem. He received the silver medal for his answer to one of the prize questions of this society, published in 1771, on the causes of the decline of Dutch commerce.[23] *Answer* systematically unites historical and philosophical analysis in search of 'a general law of nature' that explains Dutch decline through internal as well as external causes.[24] In Zillesen's eyes this is a new kind of historical analysis, but his work nonetheless presents well-known material. The historical part of *Answer* is explicitly based on *Fatherland's History* by Jan Wagenaar, the most respected Dutch eighteenth-century historian, in order to make the historical analysis of Dutch decline as credible as possible.[25] Despite its focus on concrete commercial matters, *Answer* already relates the decline of commerce to the corruption of morals. 'Decline enters Trade when *Luxury*, - which includes Splendor, Excess, Opulence and Wastefulness, - starts to dominate a Country of Commerce'.[26]

Inquiry into the Causes of the Rise, Decline and Regeneration of the Most Important Ancient and Modern Peoples, a six-volume history published between 1781-1784, can be understood as a continuation and

21 Van Sas, *De metamorfose*. Also consult the contributions in: Jacob and Mijnhardt, *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century*.

22 Zillesen mentions this lack of a university-education in: Zillesen, *Aanmerkingen op het Leydsche Ontwerp*, 5.

23 For the economic thought of Zillesen I refer to: Stapelbroek, 'The Haarlem 1771 Prize Essay', 257-285, esp. 280-283.

24 Zillesen, '*DERDE ANTWOORD OP DE VRAAGE*', 307-548, esp. 312. 'eener algemeene Natuurwet'.

25 Zillesen continuously refers to Wagenaar, for instance in: '*ANTWOORD*', 314-315.

26 Ibidem, 417. 'Verval komt in Koophandel, - wanneer *Luxe*, - waar onder Pragt, Overdaad, Weelde en Verkwisting behoord, - in een Land van Commercie de overhand neemt'.

elaboration of Zillesen's *Answer*.[27] His *Inquiry* analyzes 'by what fortunate in- and external circumstances the most important Peoples have risen and subsequently fallen again'.[28] Zillesen explicitly combines historical and philosophical analysis, even though the historical and analytical sections of *Inquiry* are strictly separated. Its chapters are also subdivided into numbered sections, comparable to works of philosophy. Nonetheless, *Inquiry* is largely a traditional chronological narrative that traces the succession of rulers and wars that defined Dutch history.

Just like most Dutch historiography from the Patriot Era (1780-1787), *Inquiry* is overtly political. Zillesen can be described as an increasingly conservative Patriot who occupies a middle position between radical Patriots, opponents of the old order, and Orangists, supporters of the stadholder.[29] *Inquiry* extensively praises the Dutch constitution, the *Union of Utrecht* (1579), because this constitution explains the rise and fourishing of the Republic. Zillesen therefore defends 'the shared government by the stadholder and the states [as] fundamentally useful and beneficial to the state, provided its power is and remains well-defined, without infringing on municipal privileges'.[30] This moderate Patriot position is combined with a passionate defense of Dutch neutrality in international politics, as a positive review of *Inquiry* emphasizes, because a modern commercial republic can only thrive in times of peace.[31] But instead of staying neutral in the many European wars, the stadholder entered into defensive alliances and attempted to increase his powers by arguing for a stronger army.[32] If, as Zillesen argues, the English fleet threatens the Dutch Republic more than the French army does, then a large Dutch army is unnecessary. Neglecting the fleet, however, which the Patriots accuse the stadholder of doing, endangers trade and commerce to a far greater extent.

Zillesen participated more directly in the political debates of the 1780s in two pamphlets. *Well-intentioned Advice to my Fatherland* (1785) calls for citizen militias as the only way to ensure Dutch liberty: 'bearing arms is for all free peoples the strongest defense against internal domination

27 Zillesen, *Onderzoek der Oorzaaken*, Vol I, ii. From the second volume onwards the title becomes: *Onderzoek der Oorzaaken van de Opkomst, het Verval en Herstel der Vereenigde Nederlanden*.

28 Ibidem, vol. I, i. 'door wat voor gelukkige in- en uitwendige omstandigheden de voornaamste Volken zijn opgekomen en weder tot verval geraakt'.

29 Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme*, 207-211.

30 Zillesen, *Onderzoek der Oorzaaken*, vol. V, 232. 'het stadhouderlijk staatsbestuur [als] wezendlijk nuttig en voordeelig voor den staat, mits het gezag van dien bepaald is en blijft, zonder inbreuken te doen op de stedelijke privilegien'.

31 *Algemeene Vaderlandsche Letteroefeningen* 4:1 (1782) 354-362.

32 Zillesen, *Onderzoek der Oorzaaken*, vol. IV, 222.

as well as external enemies'.[33] Only a year later, however, *Remarks on the Leiden Draft* (1786) heavily criticizes these militias, arguably because the increasingly radical nature of the Patriot movement worried Zillesen.[34] In his opinion, *Leiden Draft* does not understand the true causes of decline.[35] 'All Countries will only reach a certain optimal state. Prosperity leads to riches, riches to *luxury* or splendor, splendor to inactivity, and that inactivity then causes the acquired riches to flow to those peoples that are especially active'.[36] It is therefore a mistake to blame the stadholderate or the Dutch constitution for the decline of the Republic. 'As far as the decline of Trade is concerned, that does not stem from internal, but from external circumstances', namely the increased competition from other countries.[37] As opposed to what the *Leiden Draft* argues, democracy is certainly not the answer to the Dutch problems. 'Is it possible to reform Nations which have degenerated into opulence and moral decay that easily through *Platonic* designs?'[38] Without moral regeneration, a democracy is actually the most dangerous political system. Liberty easily degenerates into license.

His political activities as a Patriot in Schiedam most likely forced Zillesen to flee the country after a Prussian army restored stadholder William V to power in 1787. Exiled, Zillesen abandoned most of his previously-held positions after the French Revolution in the two-volume *The Honor of Patriotism in the Seven United Provinces Defended* (1792).[39] Whereas *Leiden Draft* was criticized for its plea for a representative democracy, Zillesen now defends the right of the Dutch people 'to improve the abuses that have arisen by implementing a system that enables the people to exert their influence on the

33 Zillesen, *Welmeenende Raad aan mijn Vaderland*, 27. 'de Wapenoefening is voor alle vrije volken het sterkste bolwerk voor overheersing van binnen en vijanden van buiten'.

34 Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme*, 207-213. The new position of Zillesen is heavily criticized in: Demofilus, *De eer en het recht van Hollands inwoonders verdeedigd*. A middle position is taken in: *Nieuwe Algemeene Vaderlandsche Letter-oefeningen* 1:1 (1786) 245-253.

35 *Ontwerp, om de Republiek door eene heilzaame vereeniging der belangen van regent en burger, van binnen gelukkig, en van buiten gedugt te maken* (Leiden 1785).

36 Zillesen, *Aanmerkingen op het Leydsche Ontwerp*, 44-45. 'Alle Landen hebben maar een zeker toppunt van hoogte daar ze toe komen. De welvaard geeft rykdommen, de rykdommen *luxe* of weelde, de weelde werkloosheid, en de werkloosheid doet de vergaarde schatten weer vloeien naar die volken welke in werkzaamheid uitmunten'.

37 Ibidem, 27. 'Wat nu het verval van de Koophandel belangt, dat komt niet uit inwendige, maar uitwendige omstandigheden'.

38 Ibidem, 28. 'Kan men Natien die door rykdommen tot weelde en zedeverbastering vervallen zyn; zo gemakkelyk door *Platonische* ontwerpen reformeeren?'.

39 Roosendaal, *Bataven!*, 553; Zillesen, *De Eer van het Patriottismus*. While this work was written under the pseudonym 'Philalethes Batavus', Zillesen acknowledges his authorship in a later edition. He possibly contributed to the *Duinkerksche historische courant* during his time in exile. Hanou, 'De *Duinkerksche historische courant* (1791-1792)', 183-197.

nominations of their Regents in a well-regulated fashion'.[40] His political ideas change radically - which happens with many moderate Patriots - and they are now often diametrically opposed to those he had entertained a decade earlier. After the Batavian Revolution, Zillesen emphasizes that Dutch politics had been bad politics, with or without the stadholderate. 'In my opinion, the entire decline in Trade and Wealth finds its origin in our System of Government, and the complete decline of our Finances originates from the same wicked source'.[41] Even though many of his positions change, Zillesen consistently maintains that nothing or nobody is perfect. This explains his moderate stance on most issues.

Zillesen nonetheless heavily criticizes the *Union of Utrecht* on many occasions after the revolution. Patriots had merely opposed the arbitrary powers of the stadholder: 'never have the then-patriots desired to destroy the stadholderate, or have they sought to change the constitution of this country'.[42] Previously this was how Zillesen defended his own Patriot position, but Patriots are now criticized for not addressing the true causes of the decline of the Republic: federalism, aristocracy and the stadholderate. The criticism of federalism in particular explains why the unification of the Netherlands and its financial system was of the utmost importance to unitarians such as Zillesen.[43] The opposition between provincial interests and the interests of the Republic as a whole can only be remedied in a fundamentally new constitution: 'our entire structure of State must be torn down completely, and nothing old must remain, or the new will be immediately infected and ruined by it'.[44] Opponents of the unification of the Republic mistakenly claim that the old order explains its rise to power, Zillesen states. It is more likely that other countries had even worse political systems.[45] Ironically, the position that external factors explain Dutch decline had been used just a decade earlier by himself to defend the *Union of Utrecht*.

The first Dutch parliament - the National Assembly - convened for the first time on 1 March 1796.[46] From then onwards, debates on a new

40 Zillesen, *Eer van het Patriottismus*, vol. II, 23. 'de ingesloopen misbruiken te verbeteren, door eenen geregelden invloed des Volks, op het nomineeren zyner Regenten in het gebruik te brengen'.

41 Zillesen, *Wijsgeerig onderzoek* (1796) 153. 'Heeft alle verval van Handel en Welvaard naar mijn inzien zijn oorsprong uit ons Staatsbestuur, het totaal verval onzer Finantien komt uit dezelve verderfelijke bron'.

42 Zillesen, *Geschiedenis der Vereenigde Nederlanden*, vol. I, 210. 'nooit hebben de patriotten van dien tijd het stadhouderschap willen vernietigen, of de constitutie des lands zoeken te veranderen'.

43 Velema, 'Republikeinse democratie', 27-63, esp. 37-38.

44 Zillesen, *WYSGEERIGE BESCHOUWING over de representative regeeringe*, 98. 'ons gantsche Staatsgebouw moet tot de grond toe afgebroken, en niets oud daar in gelaaten worden, of het nieuwe werd daadelijk er door aangestooken en bedorven'. Velema, *Republicans*, 191.

45 Zillesen, *Geschiedenis der Vereenigde Nederlanden*, vol. I, 1; Zillesen, *Wijsgeerig onderzoek*, 287.

46 Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld*.

constitution define Dutch political discourse.[47] Zillesen tirelessly participated in these debates. ‘As a disinterested Citizen, who has spent his life tracing the causes of the rise and fall of Peoples in history, I cannot stay silent at this vital time for our Fatherland, about a design that can result in the people's happiness or misery’.[48] Zillesen here refers to the first constitutional draft that was rejected by overwhelming majority of the Dutch people. Even new elections and a new constitutional committee could not break the impasse that characterizes the two years after the first session of the Dutch parliament. After a coup on 22 January 1798, the parliament and the constitutional committee were purged by the unitarians. Quickly thereafter, the unification of the provinces and their debts was formalized in the constitution of 1798.

While the political positions of Zillesen clearly change, that is not the case with his ideas about historical development. After the new constitution is instituted, he publishes another six-volume work, *History of the United Netherlands* (1798-1802), which is chronologically, thematically and methodologically the sequel to *Inquiry*. It also analyzes history in order to find ways to reverse the downfall of the Netherlands. Zillesen is praised by reviewers for his use of original source material, but one of them attacks his analytical approach.[49] A review of the third volume of *History* observes that this volume ‘is again, like the previous one, interlaced with comments which do not belong to the craft of the Historian’.[50] In the next volume Zillesen reacted in a lengthy footnote to critics who desire ‘that he should aim to describe the events, and leave the evaluation to the Reader’ and replies that ‘a Writer should not be less of a thinking being than a Reader’.[51] It surprises him that reviewers praised his *Inquiry* for the same reasons that *History* was now being criticized. Continuity thus exists in the histories of Zillesen, at least in his own opinion. He studies history philosophically to explain the rise as well as the fall of states, in the hope that his enlightened analysis of history can help to restore the Dutch Republic.

47 Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen*.

48 Zillesen, *Vrije Gedagten of Aanmerkingen*, vii. ‘Als een belangloos Burger, die zijn leeftijd versleeten heeft om de oorzaaken van de opkomst en verval der Volken uit de geschiedenissen op te speuren, zo kan ik niet zwijgen in dit belangrijk tijdvak voor ons Vaderland, over een ontwerp dat tot 's Volks geluk of ongeluk kan dienen’.

49 Elias notes that the volumes of *Geschiedenis* often consist for 80% of citations: *Bijdrage*, 60.

50 *Nieuwe Vaderlandsche Bibliotheek, van Wetenschap, Kunst en Smaak* 4:1 (1800) 244. ‘is al wederöm, even als het vorige, met aanmerkingen doorweeven, die niet tot het vak van den Geschiedschrijver behooren’.

51 Zillesen, *Geschiedenis der Vereenigde Nederlanden*, vol. IV, 174, 175. ‘dat hij zich beijvere de gebeurtenissen te boeken, en de beöordeling aan den Lezer overtelaate’, ‘een Schrijver behoort niet minder een denkend wezen te zijn, dan een Lezer’. Elias, *Bijdrage*, 68-69.

Circles of Desire

The assumption of a close relationship between history and human nature characterizes Zillesen's work. A common early-modern axiom underlies his analysis: human behavior is driven by self-interest. That explains the advice ‘not to consider man as he ought to be, but as he is’.[52] Human nature also explains why nothing fundamentally new happens in history. Interests may change, but the fact that they drive men does not. ‘Every era produces events which seem to man's limited reason to be new in its kind, but once their causes are discovered they turn out to be nothing new’.[53] A philosophical investigation of the past is nonetheless useful, for the very reason that the same causes have the same consequences. *Inquiry* thus intends ‘to draw useful conclusions from the past for the present, in order to avoid the harmful and use the beneficial’.[54] A humanist understanding of history as *magistra vitae* is therefore combined with the enlightened search for historical patterns and causal explanations.[55]

Throughout his work Zillesen develops a geometric model that explains both human and historical development, in particular the progress of European civilization.[56] The development of history is mirrored in the development of man. Men as well as peoples require cultivation of their desires, without which their reason is no match for their passions. Individuals only need years for this cultivation, but societies need centuries. Desires are presented as a circle and the diameter of this circle is the ability to satisfy them.[57] When times were simple, desires were simple. ‘In the ages of ignorance, the circles of human activity had a smaller radius and circumference, but the increase in knowledge in more civilized times multiplied the objects of desire,

52 Zillesen, *WYSGEERIGE VERKLAARING der RECHTEN en PLIGTEN*, 17. ‘om den mensch niet te beschouwen zo als hij behoord te zijn, maar zo als hij is’. This is a key principle in Zillesen's earlier work, as a review emphasizes in: *Algemeene Vaderlandsche Letter-oefeningen* 1 (1795) 595-599, esp. 595.

53 Zillesen, *Onderzoek der Oorzaaken*, vol. V, 181. ‘Elk tijdvak levert verschijnzels op, die voor 's menschen bekrompene vernuft als nieuw in zijn soort schijnen, doch waar van de oorzaaken ontdekt wordende, niets nieuws behelzen’.

54 Zillesen, *Onderzoek der Oorzaaken*, vol. I, ii. ‘om nuttige gevolgen te trekken uit het voorledene voor het tegenwoordige, om daar door het schaadelijke te vermijden en van het voordeelige gebruik te maaken’. Velema, *Omstreden Oudheid*, 9.

55 Velema, ‘Antiquity and Modernity in the Eighteenth Century’, 23-24; Haitsma Mulier, ‘Between humanism and Enlightenment’.

56 Clear examples can be found in: Zillesen, *Wijsgeerige Beschouwingen van den Mensch in Maatschappije*, 13-14; Zillesen, *WYSGEERIGE BESCHOUWING over de representative* regeeringe, 10-13; Zillesen, *Wijsgeerig onderzoek*, 11-12, 79-80.

57 As is often the case in Zillesen's oeuvre, his analyses differ slightly from work to work. The image of two expanding circles exists alongside the image of a circle and its diameter that expand simultaneously.

and enlarged the field of desires in men as well as peoples'.[58] The more men improve their condition, which they actively do as a result of their interest-driven nature, the more they desire and the larger their circles of desire become.

Because happiness lies in the fulfillment of desires, as Zillesen explains most elaborately in his *Philosophical Reflections on Man in Society* (1797), it is not the total sum of pleasure that defines our happiness, but rather whether our desires are met. Alexander the Great was still not satisfied after all of his conquests.[59] The fact that happiness is not caused by the size of the circle - it rather lies in the relationship between the circle and its diameter - explains why men can be happy under any circumstances. The progress of civilization therefore does not necessarily cause more happiness, on the contrary: 'because of this [progress] the circle of human activity is also enlarged, in diameter and circumference, in the case of men as well as peoples, from which previously unknown clashes arise'.[60] As the desires and activity of men increase, their circles are more likely to clash. Because the moral world lacks a natural order, a political order is necessary to reduce these clashes.

It already becomes clear in *Inquiry* that interests rather than virtues explain the development of European civilization: 'proportionally to the rewards for merit and abilities, capable minds come together in competition for money where the rewards are to be found'.[61] The limited amount of talent seeks wealth, which explains why rich countries become more civilized. Probably inspired by the historical periodization of Voltaire, Zillesen acknowledges that arts and sciences flourished especially under rulers such as Louis XIV.[62] This reveals a fundamental difference between manners and morals, however. 'Consequently, the nations have generally become more and more civilized in external manners, but I will not aim to prove that the moral character of mankind has improved through this civilization'.[63] Again the downsides of the

58 Zillesen, *Geschiedenis der Vereenigde Nederlanden*, vol. I, 2. 'In de eeuwen van onkunde, waren de kringen der menschelijke werkzaamheden kleinder van straal en omtrek, de toeneemende kennis in beschaafder tijden vermeerderde de voorwerpen ter genieting, en verwijdde het veld der begeertens bij menschen en volken'.

59 Zillesen, *WYSGEERIGE BESCHOUWING over de representative regeeringe*, 11.

60 Zillesen, *Geschiedenis der Vereenigde Nederlanden*, vol. I, 2. 'hier door is ook de kring der menschelijke werkzaamheid vergroot, in middellijn en omtrek, zo bij menschen als volken, en waar uit weer, eertijds onbekende botzingen, ontstaan'.

61 Zillesen, *Onderzoek der Oorzaaken*, vol. VI, 31. 'in evenredigheid dat verdienste en bekwaamheden beloond worden, komen de schrandere geesten ter mededinging van rondsomme tot de plaats der belooning zaamenvloeien'.

62 Pocock, *Narratives of Civil Government*, 84-87.

63 Zillesen, *Onderzoek der Oorzaaken*, vol. V, 186. 'De natien zijn over het algemeen door dezelve meer en meer in uiterlijke gemanierdheden beschaafd geworden, maar of door deeze beschaving de zeedelijke characters van het menschdom zijn verbetert wil ik niet aanneemen te bewijzen'.

development of European civilization become clear.

In line with most other Dutch thinkers, Zillesen nonetheless opposes the idea of Rousseau that the progress of the arts, sciences and civilization is essentially a negative development.[64] Civilization is definitely preferable over the barbarian past of Europe, even though not all its consequences are beneficial. 'In the civilization of mankind the Good is accompanied by Evil, and Virtue by Vice, but this has its origin not in civilization itself, but in the abuse by man of the increased good or civilization'.[65] The enlightened narrative of the development of Europe is thus unable to entirely escape the humanist concern that virtues easily turn into vices, especially considering the prominent place of the self-interested nature of mankind that explains the progress of civilization as well as the corruption of morals.

After the Batavian Revolution Zillesen further developed his enlightened narrative of the rise of European civilization.[66] Ancient societies were essentially children who were not ready for their liberty. 'Greeks nor Romans, despite the desire of men to take them as examples, have ever reached that level of civilization which would earn them glory, because they merely sought their greatness in warfare, which violates all the fundamental principles of wisdom and virtue'.[67] The introduction of Christianity did not diminish ignorance and the thirst for war, on the contrary. While the state deprived men of their liberty of action, the church set out to deprive them of their liberty of thought. The Middle Ages are defined by this alliance. In line with the work of William Robertson - arguably the most popular Scottish philosophical historian in the Republic - Zillesen considers the Crusades a temporary stimulus to commerce and liberty.[68] Apart from them, the hereditary rights of rulers, together with their control over standing armies, completed the state of slavery of the European people.

A turning-point in the history of European civilization is the invention

64 Gobbers, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau in Holland*; Velema, *Enlightenment and Conservatism in the Dutch Republic*, 61-72.

65 Zillesen, *Wijsgeerig onderzoek*, 13-14. 'In de beschaving van het menschdom hoe zeer het Goed met Kwaad, en Deugd met Ondeugd als vergezeld gaan, heeft zulks zijn grond niet in de beschaving, maar uit het misbruik dat de mensch van het meerdere goed of beschaving maakt'.

66 The importance of narratives of European development in enlightened thought is analyzed in: O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment*; Edelstein, *The Enlightenment*; Pocock, *Narratives of Civil Government*. Also see: Stuurman, 'Tijd en ruimte in de Verlichting', 79-96.

67 Zillesen, *Wijsgeerige Beschouwingen*, 44. 'Geene Grieken of Romeinen, hoe zeer men dezelve tot voorbeelden wil neemen, zijn ooit tot dien trap van beschaving gekomen, dat zij roem verdienen, om dat zij alleen hunne grootheid zogten in den oorlog, strijdig tegen alle grondbeginzelen van wijsheid en deugd'.

68 Zillesen, *Wijsgeerig onderzoek*, 35-36. Stijl also follows Roberton on this point: Van Deurssen, 'Wijsgerige geschiedschrijving in Nederland', 103-120, esp. 106, n. 26, 116. Haitsma Mulier, 'Between Humanism and Enlightenment', 178.

of the printing press.[69] While this invention enabled a scientific revolution as well as higher productivity, the steady stream of bullion from the newly discovered Americas ensured a way to pay for this development. Here the geometric model manifests itself clearly: the wealth of nations increased through the development of sciences and commerce, but the desires of nations increased simultaneously. This explains the continual warfare and the lack of moral progress that accompanied the rise of civilization. Ironically, European rulers encouraged the progress of commerce and civilization in order to benefit from the resulting riches, Zillesen notes, while this progress turned out to be the precondition for Enlightenment and revolution:

> the lust for power had caused its own demise, by raising mankind to a higher level of civilization in order to benefit from its fruits, without realizing that the mental abilities of man would develop through civilization, as nature does through cultivation, and that through this development man would learn his true worth, and that knowledge would put an end to domination.[70]

Enlightened reason and knowledge of the rights of man replace ignorance, which is the foundation of despotism and superstition. In other words, societies become adults. 'That humanity develops into a more mature state is in my opinion clearly discernible in the progress of civilization and the higher level of perfection that human knowledge, arts and sciences have reached'.[71] The Batavian and French Republic now understand the rights of man as the foundation of their political order. That is unprecedented. People in the past only exchanged one ruler for another, but 'now the struggle is about nothing less than the liberty or slavery of peoples, the victory of monarchies or that of republics'.[72]

Zillesen nonetheless warns that the eighteenth-century revolutions do not change human nature. 'Men reveal in every revolution that they remain human'.[73] The dynamics of history will not change fundamentally, because

69 Zillesen, *Wijsgeerige Beschouwingen*, 25.

70 Zillesen, *Geschiedenis der Vereenigde Nederlanden*, vol. I, 332-333. 'de heerszucht had zelfs mede gewerkt tot haar val, door het menschdom tot grooter trap van beschaving te brengen, om des te meer vruchten van hetzelve te kunnen trekken, zonder op dat oogenblik te voorzien, dat de menschelijke geestvermogens door beschaving zich zouden ontwinden, even als de natuur door bearbeiden, en door dat die ontwinding de mensch zijn waarde zou leeren kennen, en die kennis alle overheerschend gezag ten val moest brengen'.

71 Ibidem, 1-2. 'Dat de menschheid rijpt tot grooter volkomenheid, dunkt mij is klaar te bespeuren, uit den voortgang der beschaving, en grooter trap van volmaaktheid, waar toe de menschelijke kennis, kunsten en wetenschappen zijn geklommen'.

72 Ibidem, vol. II, 261-262. 'thans is de strijd niet minder dan om de vrijheid of slavernij der volken, de zegepraal der monarchien of die der republieken'.

73 Ibidem, vol. III, 277. 'De mensch betoont bij alle onwentelingen mensch te blijven'.

human nature cannot. Enlightenment and civilization may enable men to pursue their interests more effectively, but these interests are not necessarily more enlightened or civilized. The rights of man, which are eternal and universal, arguably allow for the institution of a more stable and sustainable political order. These rights are also vulnerable to abuse, however, as the Terror illustrates.[74] 'Without Wisdom and Virtue of rulers and ruled, civilization is useless, because the increase of knowledge, when abused, magnifies the chaos in the Moral World'.[75] While Zillesen, then, does not subscribe to the cultural pessimism of Rousseau, the philosophical historian stays clear from an unequivocal celebration of European civilization.[76]

Central to the position of Zillesen is the necessity of politics.[77] That politics is driven by interests will never change, but clashes between them can be prevented by a proper constitution. 'Self-interest, the motive of human activity, if wisely governed, results in happiness, but if left to its own devices, in misery'.[78] The *Union of Utrecht* might have been conducive to liberty, but not to the common interest. 'No central point of power exists here in which the common interest centers, and which governs the activity of subordinate self-interests'.[79] Consequently, the Dutch Republic 'is not one Circle, but several Circles, which each have their own center, radius and circumference'.[80] The interests of all provinces and citizens should not clash, but rather converge in the middle of the circle. A new Dutch political order must ensure '*that every man contributes to the greatest possible common interest of the Fatherland with as little loss of his own self-interest as possible*'.[81] Zillesen's geometric model thus explains why only unification can bring about the Republic's recovery.[82]

74 Ibidem, vol. I, 279.

75 Zillesen, *Wijsgeerig onderzoek*, 58. 'Zonder Wijsheid en Deugd van hen die regeeren en hen die geregeerd worden, is zelfs alle beschaving onnut, want de vermeerdering van kennis, misbruikt wordende, vergroot de wanorde in de Moreele Waereld'.

76 See for a study on pessimism in the French Enlightenment: Vyverberg, *Historical Pessimism in the French Enlightenment*.

77 Zillesen, *WYSGEERIGE BESCHOUWING over de representative regeeringe*, 6.

78 Zillesen, *WYSGEERIGE VERKLAARING der RECHTEN en PLIGTEN*, 8. 'Eigenbelang, die drijfveer van 's menschen werkzaamheid, geeft, wijselijk bestuurd, geluk; en aan zich zelven overgelaten, ongeluk'.

79 Zillesen, *Wijsgeerig onderzoek*, 220. 'Hier was geen Middelpunt van magt, in welke zich het algemeen belang verzaamelde, en die de beweeging mededeelde aan alle de daar aan ondergeschikte eigen belangens'.

80 Ibidem, 272. 'is geen ééne Cirkel, maar verschillende Cirkels, die ieder hun bijzonder middelpunt, straal en omtrek hebben'.

81 Ibidem, 215. '*dat een ieder met het minst mogelijk verlies van zijn eigenbelang, medewerkt tot het hoogst mogelijk algemeen belang des Vaderlands*.' Also in: Zillesen, *Eer van het Patriottismus*, vol. II, 81.

82 Compare this analysis of the Zillesen's support for the unification of the Netherlands with that of Velema in: *Het Bataafse Experiment*, 37. They are not mutually exclusive, but have quite different emphases.

Vulnerable Virtue

According to Velema, luxury is Zillesen's explanation in *Inquiry* for the decline of the Dutch Republic: the eighteenth-century commercial elite is morally corrupted as a consequence of this luxury, whereas its seventeenth-century counterpart had been virtuous.[83] Zillesen is indeed concerned about a decline in Dutch morals, for instance through the popularity of French fashions, but this concern is part of a broader analysis of the forces that drive history. The origin of evil lies in the human tendency towards improvement, Zillesen observes in the introduction of *Inquiry*, because a thirst for knowledge explains why Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.[84] More generally, evil always finds its origin in good.

> Indeed! the truth of this axiom even becomes apparent through the abuse of the most shiny VIRTUES, because even they [...] can turn into malicious vices, since the outer limits of virtue and vice cannot be distinguished in most cases without an enlightened mind.[85]

Even the most praiseworthy virtues can thus easily turn into vices. That humanist concern invites the cyclical understanding of history captured in the title of *Inquiry*.[86] 'Indeed! history reveals that exactly those means through which empires increase their power, in every direction, also contribute to their demise'.[87] The rise of a state thus necessarily foreshadows its decline.

That history follows a cyclical path does not discourage Zillesen from studying the relationship between internal and external causes that explains the development of a state. A similar approach is taken by Simon Stijl, who has been characterized as the first as well as the best Dutch philosophical historian, in *The Rise and Flourishing of the United Netherlands* (1774).[88] Zillesen had undoubtedly read this highly popular history, which explicitly draws upon *The*

83 Velema, *Republicans*, 78-79.

84 Zillesen, *Onderzoek der Oorzaaken*, vol. I, 1. Zillesen also develops this idea in *Wijsgeerige Beschouwingen*, 8.

85 Zillesen, *Onderzoek der Oorzaaken*, vol. I, 2. 'Ja! de waarheid van deezen stelregel blijkt zelfs uit het misbruik der blinkendste DEUGDEN, daar deezen zelfs [...] in snoode ondeugden kunnen veranderen, om dat de uiterste grenspaalen van deugd en ondeugd, in veele gevallen niet dan door een verligt oordeel zijn te onderkennen'.

86 Ibidem, 2-3.

87 Ibidem, 46. 'Ja! de geschiedenissen leeren, dat juist die zelfde middelen, waar door de rijken hunne magt vergrooten, en wijd en zijd uitbreiden, ook wederom medewerken tot hun val'.

88 Stijl, *De opkomst en bloei van de Republiek der Vereenigde Nederlanden*. Stijl is characterized as the best Dutch philosophical historian in: Smitskamp, 'Simon Stijl als verlicht geschiedschrijver, 86-102, esp. 99. Haitsma Mulier considers Stijl to be the first one in: '"Hoofsche papegaaien" of "redelyke schepsels"', 450-475, esp. 450. Also see: Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme*, 27-31, 47-48; Leeb, *The Ideological Origins*, 122-136.

Spirit of the Laws of Montesquieu.[89] His systematic comparison of internal and external circumstances as the explanation for the development of states is often considered a key element of a new historical consciousness.[90] Zillesen seems inspired by the analysis of Montesquieu, who was widely read in the Dutch Republic.[91] Throughout his work, the interaction between internal and external causes plays a pivotal role in Zillesen's analysis. Morals, religion, customs, political systems, climate, location, civilization and wealth 'are as many *internal* sources, from which good and evil, virtue and vice flow freely, and from which the prosperity or adversity of peoples is born'.[92] Together with their external counterparts, especially the level of competition from other countries, these internal causes explain a state's success. The relationship between these causes is historical and thus changes constantly. In the end, however, the historical rule applies '*that every people reaches a certain level of development, and, having reached that point, naturally declines again*'.[93]

A sense of a naturally cyclical course of history is a commonplace in early-modern historiography, but in the case of Zillesen this notion has a more theoretical foundation. From a classical-republican perspective, as Pocock has shown, the role of virtue in politics explains this cyclical pattern. Virtues are a prerequisite for the development of a state, while they are also vulnerable to corruption.

> What is true of peoples is true of dynasties and families; true virtue ensures their rise, and makes them invincible in times of adversity, while moral corruption consumes even the most extensive wealth, and opens the door to a succession of disasters, as a consequence of which the previous honor, glory, wealth, status and liberty are lost in a vortex of harmful desires made even stronger by luxury, to be followed by poverty and often ending in slavery.[94]

89 Stijl, *De opkomst en bloei van de Republiek der Vereenigde Nederlanden*, 398.

90 According to Schiffman, the idea of the past was born as a result of the systematic comparisons of Montesquieu: *The Birth of the Past*, 235-265.

91 For the reception of Montesquieu in the Republic I refer to the fifth chapter of Velema's *Republicans*.

92 Zillesen, *Onderzoek der Oorzaaken*, vol. I, 3. 'zijn als zo veele *inwendige* bronnen, waar uit goed en kwaad, deugd en ondeugd weeldig ontspringen, en waar uit de welvaart of tegenspoed der volken geboren worden'. My italics.

93 Ibidem, 4. '*dat elk volk tot zekeren trap van rijpheid komt, en, dien bereikt hebbende, natuurlijk weder vervalt*'. Zillesen repeats this rule in the context of Dutch decline in: Ibidem, vol. III, 261.

94 Ibidem, vol. VI, 26-27. 'Het is met volken, als met geslachten en huisgezinnen; waare deugd doet hun groeien en bloeien, en maakt hen onverwinnelijk in kruis en tegenspoeden, daar in tegendeel zedeverbastering de bloeienste welvaart verslint, en de deur opent voor een sleep van rampen en wederwaardigheden, waar door alle voormaalige eer, roem, rijkdom, aanzien en vrijheid, verzinkt in den draaikolk van een door weelde vermeerderde schadelijke behoefte, die door armoede wordt opgevolgd en veeltijds in slavernij eindigt'.

The first volume of *Inquiry* analyzes the history of ancient peoples along these lines, while the five subsequent volumes focus on Dutch history. Even though the military character of ancient societies such as the Roman Republic can of course be clearly distinguished from the commercial nature of the Dutch Republic, the decline of both of these republics is caused by moral corruption. Roman military virtue resulted in victory after victory over enemies that were weakened by corruption, imperial overstretch and internal strife. 'However, all these victories ruined Rome internally, the simple and strict morals subsequently became vices absorbing the riches, as a consequence of which corruption started to flourish on the foundation of fortune'.[95] Virtue is vulnerable, which means that fortune is an unreliable ally. '*Rome* approached such a pinnacle in its existence that the weight of fortune necessarily had to cause its decline'.[96] The demise of Rome is thus foreshadowed in its rise. The course of its history is cyclical, but throughout history the rise of one state is made possible by the decline of another.

Dutch virtue brought about commercial success, which resulted in a level of wealth that has corrupted Dutch morals. Zillesen notes 'that the opulence born out of wealth corrupted morals, and consumed all riches in an all-devouring maelstrom'.[97] Corruption 'was so strong that virtue, the largest gem of peoples, was suffocated by it'.[98] Alongside this internal cause of decline, Zillesen also points towards the main external reason for the decline of the Dutch Republic: the rise of a political economy after 1648. 'The importance of trade started to become a matter of state in the eyes of rulers'.[99] The Dutch example had encouraged other European countries to develop commercial activities. Commerce is consequently the cause of modern wars, Zillesen emphasizes, which is a clear example of the good turning into the bad. 'Trade, the bond of human interaction, thus became a means to destroy mankind'.[100] The Dutch economy declined proportionally to the rise of other European economies.[101] While many concrete measures can be taken to strengthen the

95 Ibidem, vol. I, 222-223. 'Doch alle deze overwinningen bedierven *Romen* inwendig, de eenvoudige en strenge zeden verwisselden vervolgens in ondeugden, welke de rijkdommen naar zich sleepten, zoo dat het zaad van hun bederf begon wortel te schieten, op den grond van het geluk'.

96 Ibidem, 223. '*Romen* was tot die hoogte genaderd, dat de zwaarte van geluk het noodwendig moest doen vallen'.

97 Ibidem, vol. II, 106. 'dat de weelde uit overvloed geboren, de zede verbasterde, en de rijkdommen in den draaikolk van verslinding verslond'.

98 Ibidem. 'was zoo sterk dat de deugd, het grootste cieraad der volken, daar door verstikt wordt'.

99 Ibidem, vol. IV, 146-147. 'Het belang des koophandels begon nu bij de vorsten een punt van staatkunde te worden'.

100 Ibidem, vol. V, 288. 'Dus moest dan de koophandel, die band der menschelijke zaamenleving, zelf dienstbaar worden, om het menschdom te verwoesten'.

101 Ibidem, vol. IV, 146.

Republic economically, they will be useless without moral regeneration.

The corruptibility of virtue notwithstanding, Zillesen emphasizes that the cultivation of virtue is desirable. As has become clear above, the same case is made for the development of civilization. That evil always finds its origin in the good does not mean that the pursuit of the good is a mistake. It would be a mistake, however, to try to eradicate all causes of corruption, as the analysis of Spartan history in *Inquiry* shows. The laws of Lycurgus were fundamentally flawed, even though he 'got rid of the corrupting influence stemming from riches and opulence, by quenching the sources of corruption'.[102] Zillesen reaches this conclusion since the Spartan search for stability resulted in a constitution that introduced complete equality of its citizens, thus going counter to the human tendency to promote self-interests. A crucial tension thus becomes clear. It is a reality that men act out of self-interest, but this is traditionally understood as the corruption of virtue, which requires an adherence to the common good. While virtue is a prerequisite for the rise of a republic, human nature ensures that moral corruption will always threaten its existence.

Virtue does not lose its relevance after the eighteenth-century revolutions. That virtue occupies a central place in Batavian political discourse, as Velema argues, has clear implications for the historical consciousness of Batavians.[103] After the French Revolution - in which license poses as liberty - Zillesen continuously warns against vices that masquerade as virtues. 'Virtue and vice ultimately blend together, as I have argued in my introduction on the subject of *the Rise and Fall of Peoples*'.[104] A cyclical understanding of historical development remains central to his work after the Batavian Revolution, which already becomes clear from the title of *Philosophical Inquiry into the Rise, Flourishing and Prosperity of the Netherlands, its Subsequent Decline and Remaining Means of Recovery* (1796). Again Zillesen employs philosophical history in order to explain the rise and fall of the Netherlands and stimulate its recovery. 'Repeatedly he contributes to the same theme, and it may truly be called *his* theme', a reviewer remarks.[105]

As a result of the progress of European civilization, modern republics

102 Ibidem, vol. I, 139. 'het zedebedervende uit rijkdom en weelde spruitende wegnam, door de bronnen van het bederf te stoppen'.

103 Velema, 'Republikeinse democratie', 51-62.

104 Zillesen, *WYSGEERIGE VERKLAARING* der RECHTEN en PLIGTEN, 15. 'Deugd en ondeugd smelten zich op hunne eindpaalen in een, gelijk ik in mijn inleiding wegens *de opkomst en verval der Volken* betoogd heb'. Even though the seventh part of *Onderzoek der Oorzaaken* was already written, Zillesen had not published it yet: Ibidem, 121. Here he possibly refers to *Wijsgeerig onderzoek*.

105 *Algemeene Vaderlandsche Letter-oefeningen* 1 (1797) 168-173, esp. 169. 'Steeds is hy werkzaam in 't zelfde vak, en mag het waarlyk *zyn* vak heeten'.

may be able to avoid the mistakes of their ancient predecessors. 'The Histories of those ages are a disgrace to mankind. True civilization was unknown'.[106] Zillesen heavily criticizes even the Greek city-states, in his opinion by far the most civilized of the ancient societies. He denounces their slavery, their direct democracy and their warfare. 'True virtue was rarely found with Ancient Peoples, and consequently their riches had to result in their moral degeneration'.[107] This is because they were unenlightened. Zillesen then draws a remarkable conclusion: the ancients simply did not possess enough virtue to maintain their republics. 'As soon as Peoples reach a high level of flourishing, prosperity and riches, more virtue and wisdom are required in all layers of society in order to remain unaffected by the temptation of vices'.[108] The progress of European civilization, then, does not render virtue obsolete, but the modern republics are superior to the ancient because of their greater ability to cultivate virtue.

Antiquity thus remains the yardstick against which enlightened societies are measured. Uncivilized ancients as well as civilized moderns are threatened by corruption of their virtue. Consequently, the classical-republican problem of the inevitability of decline is not solved by the Enlightenment. It may surprise his readers, Zillesen notes, but historical analysis reveals 'the state of Decline, *which inevitably follows the state of flourishing*'.[109]

> All ancient peoples, regardless of the level of prominence and prosperity they attained, declined, because they did not guard themselves against the dangerous consequences of wealth and luxury; and it is certain that no people, regardless of the level of prosperity they may reach, can maintain their wealth without remaining *virtuous* and *productive*.[110]

106 Zillesen, *Wijsgeerig onderzoek*, 23. 'De Geschiedenissen van die tijdvakken dienen ten schandvlekke van de menschheid. De waare beschaving was onbekend'. See also Rutjes, 'Niet geheel applicabel op deze tijd', 80.

107 Ibidem, 28. 'De waare deugd was zeldzaam bij de Oude Volken te vinden, en daarom kon het niet missen, of de rijkdommen moesten tot hun bederf strekken'.

108 Ibidem, 29. 'Zodra de Volken tot een groote bloei, welvaard en rijkdommen komen, is er meer deugd en wijsheid noodig onder alle de standen des volks, om tegens de verleiding der ondeugden bestand te blijven'.

109 Ibidem, 88. 'den staat van Verval, *die noodwendig op den bloeistaat moet volgen*'.

110 Ibidem, 91. 'Alle Volken der Oudheid tot wat bloei en welvaard zij gekomen waren, geraakten vervolgens weder tot Verval, om dat zij zich niet wagtten voor de schaadelijke gevolgen, welke uit de door welvaard verkregen rijkdommen voortkwaamen; en men kan wel als zeeker vaststellen, dat geen Volk tot wat welvaard het moge opklimmen, zonder deugdzaam en werkzaam te blijven, een bestendige welvaart kan genieten'.

While a people may in principle remain virtuous and productive, Zillesen points out that this has never happened in history.

An enlightened optimism about the development of mankind is expressed in the second volume of *History*: 'as true enlightenment teaches us to control the passions that divert us from the path of virtue, wise laws can improve abuses in every form of government, to further the general happiness of peoples'.[111] In this context Zillesen stresses the unprecedented nature of the Batavian Revolution, which in the eyes of Eco Haitsma Mulier constitutes a clear example of the rise of a new Dutch historical consciousness after the Batavian Revolution.[112] However, the enlightened optimism of Zillesen is already mitigated by the anticipation of moral corruption in the same volume of his *History*. 'The wealth of societies and dynasties can only reach a certain limit, before the rising tide of prosperity makes way for a low tide of adversity, which settles on an average level. A weaker or stronger decline of morals can shorten or lengthen these revolutions'.[113] Immediately after these words, Zillesen emphasizes that he has already proven the inevitability of decline in his *Philosophical Inquiry*. Contrary to the claims made by Koselleck, experiences thus continue to define his expectations: a cyclical development of history. This calls into question the modern nature of Zillesen's historical consciousness. Classical and enlightened images of history, or rather cyclical and linear ones, coexist in a complex and conficting way in his work after the Batavian Revolution.

Stranded in the present?

Of course caution is required when drawing conclusions on the basis of one case study. Nonetheless Zillesen's oeuvre provides intellectual historians with the opportunity to challenge certain claims about conceptual change during the final decades of the eighteenth century. This is not because of the originality of his ideas. Rather they are a window into the conceptual framework of many

111 Zillesen, *Geschiedenis der Vereenigde Nederlanden*, vol. II, 264. 'even zo leert de waare verlichting onze steeds van het spoor der deugd afwijkende hartstochten beteugelen, even zo kunnen wijze wetten de misbruiken in alle regeringsvormen verbeteren, tot algemeen geluk der volkeren'.

112 Haitsma Mulier, 'De achttiende eeuw als eeuw van het historisch besef', 147-152. Before the Batavian Revolution, Zillesen already defined the Dutch Revolt, especially the *Union of Utrecht*, as unprecedented. For instance in: Zillesen, *Onderzoek der Oorzaaken*, vol. III, 291. That already undermines the connection between a new historical consciousness and the characterization of the eighteenth-century revolutions as unprecedented.

113 Zillesen, *Geschiedenis der Vereenigde Nederlanden*, vol. II, 40-41. 'De rijkdommen der volken en geslachten kunnen slegts tot een zekere peil opklimmen, en na dien vloed van voorspoed komt eene eb van tegenheden, die de gemiddelde peil bepaalt. Een meerdere of mindere verbastering in zeden kan den tijd dezer onwentelingen verkorten of verlengen'.

eighteenth-century Dutchmen, in which enlightened and classical-republican ideas are inconsistently combined. Patriots as well as Batavians often use these ideas in their call for a new political order, as the existing historiography emphasizes[114]. Enlightened ideas and republican theory do not only come together in Dutch political discourse, however. As the example of Zillesen shows, Dutch philosophical history is characterized by a distinctive classical-republican undertone.[115] He develops an enlightened narrative on the progress of European civilization, which is ultimately explained through the interest-driven nature of man. This enlightened narrative is combined with a cyclical image of historical development, because virtues easily or even necessarily turn into vices. While virtues are indispensable for the rise of a state, they also explain its inevitable demise. As a result, a tension between linear and cyclical views of history, as well as between interests and virtues as its driving forces, is conspicuously present in Zillesen's work.

Despite their theoretical incompatibility, a cyclical and classical understanding of history coexists with a linear enlightened narrative. Consequently, conceptual tension rather than a clear conceptual transformation defines Zillesen's historical consciousness, before as well as after the eighteenth-century revolutions. This complicates any understanding of these revolutions as complete ruptures with the past, for instance the one Fritzsche puts forward in *Stranded in the Present*. At least in the Dutch case, experiences and expectations do not radically diverge. Linear and cyclical images of history are inconsistently combined throughout the closing years of the eighteenth century, which undermines the idea that modernity was born in this era. The revolutions must not be understood as a rupture in Zillesen's historical consciousness, but these events are rather considered by him as ruptures in history.

A more fundamental issue also arises, because analyzing Zillesen's historical consciousness problematizes the search for the origins of a modern one. The fact that enlightened and classical images of history are inextricably intertwined raises the question whether it is fruitful to approach the enlightened historical consciousness as modern at all. A search for a modern image of history arguably does not allow for the study of texts or thinkers on their own terms. Zillesen may have understood himself as an enlightened modern, but this self-image remains intimately related to classical examples and models.

114 Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme*; Velema, *Republicans*; Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen*.
115 That is also the case in the work of Simon Stijl. Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme*, 47-48.

Clearly his modernity is not ours, which means he is most likely modern by his own standards, but not by ours.[116] What this example shows is that the complexity of past ideas about history cannot be properly grasped by searching for early signs of our own modernity. Ironically, the history of the historical consciousness then takes an ahistorical turn.

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Bataefsche dapperheit
Historisch denken in het achttiende-eeuwse epos

Christophe Madelein

In early-modern times the epic was considered to be the most prestigious literary genre. Its ancient precursors were Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but the true model for early modern writers of epic poetry was Virgil's *Aeneid*. The earliest Dutch epics used Virgil's model as a formal example, but their subject matter was taken from the Bible. In the eighteenth century, however, epics on (episodes of) Dutch national history appeared. In this article I will present an overview of the use of the past for the present (and vice versa) in these epics: they constructed a transhistorical national identity. I will finish with a short analysis of a case study, *De Spanjaerdt binnen Rotterdam* by the largely unknown author Adriaen van der Vliet.

Inleiding

Op 9 september 1639 schrijft Vondel in een brief aan Hugo de Groot dat hij zijn plan om een epos over Constantijn de Grote te schrijven opgegeven heeft. Het verdriet om zijn overleden echtgenote is zo overweldigend dat hij er niet aan toe komt.

> Sedert de dood van mijn zalige huisvrouw heeft mijn couragie eenen krack gekregen, zoodat ick mijnen groten Constantyn moet vergeten, en met yet minders my zoecken te behelpen. Ick ben aen de treurspelen vervallen [...]. Als ick myn lust in treurspelen hebbe geboet, magh ick zien, of ik weder aen myn Constantyn valle; middelerwyl gelieve Uwe Exc[tie] dit voor lief te nemen, tot dat wy yet grooters vermogen.[1]

Het epos of heldendicht gold in de vroegmoderne tijd als het meest prestigieuze literaire genre en werd door de hoge moeilijkheidsgraad zelfs hoger ingeschat dan de erg gewaardeerde tragedie.[2] Het schrijven van een epos vergde een grote inhoudelijke, formele, structurele en stilistische beheersing, die bovendien erg lang moest aangehouden worden. Vondels *Constantinade* is er daarom nooit gekomen, maar in 1646 presenteerde hij wel een prozavertaling van Vergilius' verzamelde werk, met daarin uiteraard het klassieke epos *Aeneïs*. In 1655

1 Sterck, *Vondel-brieven*, 95.

2 Aron Kibédi Varga erkent dat het epos het hoogst aangeschreven genre was (*Le classicisme*, 42), maar noemt toch de tragedie ‘le genre par excellence du classicisme français’ (Ibidem, 44). Alain Génetiot betoogt hetzelfde (*Le classicisme*, 357-374).

volgde een bewerking in verzen van het tweede boek van dat epische werk, en in 1660 verscheen *Publius Vergilius Maroos Wercken in Nederduitsch dicht vertaelt door J.V. Vondel*, een nieuwe Nederlandse editie van de verzamelde werken van Vergilius, maar ditmaal in verzen. Pas in 1662 zou Vondel een eigen, oorspronkelijk epos schrijven: *Joannes de Boetgezant*.

Daarmee zorgde hij voor een primeur: *Joannes de Boetgezant* was het eerste Bijbelse epos in de Nederlandse literatuurgeschiedenis.[3] Dit subgenre groeide al snel uit tot de populairste vorm van het epos: tot het laatste kwart van de achttiende eeuw zou het aantal Bijbelse epen het aantal profane ruimschoots overtreffen. Daarna verschenen er een aantal epen die, in het spoor van *De Geusen* (1771) van Onno Zwier van Haren, de eigen vaderlandse geschiedenis tot onderwerp hadden, met name (episoden uit) de Tachtigjarige Oorlog - een opmerkelijke uitzondering is het werk van Adriana van Overstraten over de middeleeuwse gravin *Jacoba van Beieren* (1790).

In wat volgt wil ik dieper ingaan op deze vaderlandse epen. Zij vallen uiteen in twee groepen: epen die teruggrijpen naar een mythisch verleden en epen over episodes uit de nationale geschiedenis. De eerste groep sluit aan op de antieke traditie van ontstaansepen, zoals de *Aeneïs* van Vergilius. In deze epen staat de Bataafse mythe centraal, en worden 'typisch Nederlandse' deugden van een antieke traditie voorzien. In de tweede groep draait het, op één uitzondering na, om teksten die figuren en gebeurtenissen uit de Tachtigjarige Oorlog beschrijven.

Al deze teksten representeren het verleden vanuit het besef dat dat verleden dan wel over en voorbij is, maar toch relevant blijft voor de eigen tijd. Het verleden wordt ingezet om een eigentijds(e) ideologie of staatssysteem te legitimeren of juist aan te vallen waarbij een spanningsveld tussen waarheidsclaim en poëtische vrijheid ontstaat. De wisselwerking tussen die twee is in elke tekst aanwezig, maar wordt vaak niet als zodanig erkend of als problematisch ervaren door de auteur. Mij gaat het niet om die waarheidsclaim, maar om hoe de visie op het verleden (waarop de waarheidsclaim doelt) zich verhoudt tot de literaire werkelijkheid die in de tekst (met behulp van die poëtische vrijheid) opgeroepen wordt.

Ik zal laten zien dat visies op het verleden door middel van het verheerlijken van grote figuren en memorabele gebeurtenissen in deze vaderlandse epen een rol hebben gespeeld bij de creatie van een nationale

3 Zie hierover Smit, *Kalliope*, vol. I, 637-687, en Porteman & Smits-Veldt, *Een nieuw vaderland voor de muzen*, 648-650.

identiteit. Het gaat daarbij om een transhistorisch concept van nationale identiteit, dus om datgene wat 'de Nederlander' onderscheidt van andere Europeanen,[4] waardoor het beschreven verleden in de epen wordt verbonden met het (contemporaine) heden. De waarheidsclaim van deze teksten betreft veeleer deze gedeelde transhistorische identiteit dan een precieze weergave van de historische feiten. Het gaat in deze epen dus niet zozeer om het oproepen van een feitelijk correct verleden als wel om het creëren van een herkenbaar beeld van de ware Nederlandse geest. Deze rol werd in het begin van de negentiende eeuw overgenomen door de historische roman.[5] Een werk als *De Hollandsche natie* (1812) van J.F. Helmers vertoont nog epische kenmerken, maar beantwoordt al niet meer aan de strenge classicistische definitie van een epos.[6] Dat deed nog wel het gros van de achttiende-eeuwse epen door W.A.P. Smit beschreven in zijn standaardwerk over het Nederlandse epos, *Kalliope in de Nederlanden*.

Ik zal eerst de formele kenmerken van dit verloren gegane renaissancistisch-classicistische epos toelichten. Daarbij steun ik in grote mate op het werk van Smit, maar uit mijn lezing van een aantal Nederlandse vaderlandse epen uit de late achttiende eeuw zal blijken dat Smits model niet helemaal toereikend is. Tot slot zal ik ingaan op één epos, *De Spanjaerdt binnen Rotterdam* (1772) van de vergeten schrijver Adriaen van der Vliet. Zijn korte epos is opmerkelijk: het gaat niet om de verheerlijking van een grote figuur, maar om een tragische gebeurtenis, de val van Rotterdam in 1572. Ik zal betogen dat Van der Vliet hiermee aansluit bij een epische traditie waarin het creëren van een bepaalde nationale identiteit voorop staat.

Het epos, een herboren genre

In de vroegmoderne tijd grepen humanistisch geïnspireerde denkers over

4 Zie (onder vele andere) Frijhoff, 'Het zelfbeeld van de Nederlander in de achttiende eeuw'; Mijnhardt, 'Het zelfbeeld van de Nederlander: een synthese'; Rietbergen, 'Beeld en zelfbeeld'; Van Sas, 'De mythe Nederland'; Kloek en Dorsman, *Nationale identiteit en historisch besef in Nederland*. Eerder al stelde Van Sas: 'Gemeenschappelijk element in al die varianten van nationalisme was allereerst het besef van eigen en vreemd: de notie dat de eigen natie anders en beter was dan de andere, en vaak ook een bijzondere plaats in de wereld had of daar een speciale taak had te vervullen' (Van Sas, 'Vaderlandsliefde, nationalisme en vaderlands gevoel', 472)

5 Zie bij voorbeeld Jensen, *De verheerlijking van het verleden*. André Lefevere wijt de neergang van het epos als genre aan een veranderende historische context: 'My contention is that the epic, as written in the Dutch Republic in any language, dropped from sight because the system in which it not only played, but was expected to play a meaningful role, is no longer understood' (Lefevere, 'History, institution, imagination', 177). In het vervolg van zijn betoog construeert Lefevere een (mijns inziens onterechte) tegenstelling tussen literatuurgeschiedenis aan de ene kant en 'theory' aan de andere kant. Studies zoals Pieters' *Historische letterkunde vandaag en morgen* bewijzen dat het ene het andere helemaal niet hoeft uit te sluiten.

6 Zie hiervoor de inleiding bij de editie door Lotte Jensen, 'Inleiding' 34-36.

literatuur terug naar teksten uit de Oudheid. Met name de *Poëtica* van Aristoteles en de *Ars poetica* van Horatius kwamen centraal te staan. In zijn (niet volledig overgeleverde) *Poëtica* besprak Aristoteles vooral de klassieke tragedie. Hij stelde een aantal kenmerken vast die in de eeuwen daarna zouden aangenomen worden als regels voor de letterkunde. Ook Horatius' werk werd opgevat als een prescriptief 'handboek' voor schrijvers in de dop. Beide teksten samen vormden de basis voor wat de *doctrine classique* genoemd werd, de classicistische poëtica die vooral in Frankrijk ontwikkeld werd (maar over heel Europa verspreid was).[7]

In die *doctrine classique* werden de tragedie en het epos het hoogst ingeschat. Beide waren in zekere zin varianten op eenzelfde verheven vorm van schrijven. De centrale gedachte in deze poëtica was dat literatuur nabootsing is, *mimesis*. Literatuur is de nabootsing van de empirische werkelijkheid. Plato had precies om die reden de dichter verbannen uit zijn ideale staat: nabootsing was altijd inferieur ten opzichte van de werkelijkheid, die slechts een afspiegeling van de Ware vormen is. Aristoteles echter wees erop dat de mens plezier beleeft aan nabootsing, en dat nabootsing de manier is waarop de mens de werkelijkheid leert kennen: een kind leert door de volwassenen te imiteren. Horatius leidde daaruit af dat literatuur tegelijkertijd moet leren en vermaken door het nuttige aan het aangename te koppelen: het befaamde *utile dulci*.

De werkelijkheid die nagebootst werd was echter niet zomaar de natuur zoals we die ervaren: het classicisme was geen vorm van naturalisme. In het geval van het epos en de tragedie was de werkelijkheid veel verfijnder. De mensen die deze wereld bevolken waren ook 'beter' dan de gewone mens: ze waren edeler en welbespraakt. Tragedie en epos werden bovendien geschreven in een verheven stijl. In de klassieke retorica werden traditioneel drie verschillende stijlregisters onderscheiden: de lage stijl (*genus humile*) voor alledaagse onderwerpen, de gematigde stijl (*genus medium*) voor informerende teksten, en de verheven stijl (*genus sublime*) voor bijzondere gelegenheden.

De werkelijkheid en de taal van het epos en de tragedie waren dus gestileerd. Het was een wereld die boven de onze stond, beschreven in een taal die erop gericht was te imponeren. Het verschil tussen beide genres was formeel: in de tragedie bootste de auteur enkel de uitingen van de personages na; in het epos kregen we zowel de uitspraken van de personages als (uitgebreide) beschrijvingen. In het epos was er een expliciete verteller aan het woord.

7 'Contrairement à d'autres mouvements d'idées, le classicisme a sa poétique propre, un ensembelement de "règles" formulées par des théoriciens [...]. Le classicisme est la recherche d'un naturel idéalisé et la postulation d'un universalisme psychologique' (Kibédi Varga, *Le classicisme*, 5).

Deze verteller kon gebeurtenissen samenvatten, hun belang benadrukken, vergelijken met andere gebeurtenissen, alsof hij boven het verhaal zweefde. In de tragedie kon dit niet: gebeurtenissen die niet getoond werden op het toneel, moesten door een personage in een scène verteld worden.

Aristoteles had vastgesteld dat de Griekse tragedies zich afspeelden binnen het bestek van één dag, in één en dezelfde setting, en dat ze zich concentreerden op één verhaallijn. Deze drie eenheden (tijd, ruimte, en handeling) werden in het classicistisch treurspel tot wetmatigheid verheven.[8] In het epos mocht daar vrijer mee omgesprongen worden: doordat het epos (veel) langer was, was er meer ruimte voor uitweidingen, zowel in tijd, ruimte als plot.

Deze gebeurtenissen en handelingen moesten binnen de *doctrine classique* altijd beantwoorden aan een zeker decorum. Zeker in de verheven genres van het epos en de tragedie moest alles 'gepast' zijn. Het edele personage sprak in een verheven stijlregister en deed niets wat niet bij zijn hoge stand hoorde. Het literaire kunstwerk vormde zo een gepaste eenheid: het beschreef, in een verheven stijl, een verheven werkelijkheid met verheven personages die verheven daden stelden. Op die manier kwam het ook tegemoet aan de smaak van het publiek dat in geen geval gechoqueerd mocht worden. De representatie en de taal moesten passen binnen de zeden van het publiek (*bienséance*), en de gebeurtenissen moesten geloofwaardig en waarachtig zijn (*vraisemblance*). Alles moest aanvaardbaar zijn, maar niet voorspelbaar: er was wel degelijk ruimte voor het verrassende en het wonderbaarlijke (*le merveilleux*). Binnen deze context situeert W.A.P. Smit zijn standaardwerk over het Nederlandse epos, *Kalliope in de Nederlanden*. Als uitgangspunt volgt hij Vossius' *working definition*: 'Het epos is een dichtwerk in hexameters, dat in verheven stijl vertelt over grote daden, verricht door personen van aanzien en naam'.[9] Het is dus een lang verhalend gedicht (met zesvoetige verzen), onderverdeeld in verschillende zangen, over de verwezenlijkingen van de groten der aarde (of des hemels).

In de vroegmoderne tijd werd *Aeneïs* beschouwd als het epos dat het beste aan de regels van de kunst beantwoordde. Het werd hét na te volgen model en de formele kenmerken van Vergilius' meesterwerk werden normatief. Ook Smit beoordeelt de Nederlandse epen in het licht van dit keurslijf. Hij introduceert daarmee een ander aspect van de classicistische poëtica. Het kernelement van die poëtica was, zoals eerder aangehaald, nabootsing. Dat

8 Zie De Haas, *De wetten van het treurspel*.

9 Smit, *Kalliope*, vol. I, 141. In andere werken, zoals *The History of the Epic* onder redactie van Adeline Johns-Putra, wordt een veel bredere definitie van het epos gehanteerd, waarbij ook prozawerken tot het epische genre gerekend worden. In dit artikel blijf ik dichter bij Smits definitie, die zich beperkt tot poëzie.

was echter niet enkel nabootsing van de werkelijkheid (*mimesis*), maar ook nabootsing en navolging van de klassieke literatuur (*imitatio*). De klassieke literatuur werd beschouwd als onovertroffen en diende dus als model voor de eigentijdse literatuur - wat in de zeventiende eeuw aanleiding zou geven tot de befaamde *Querelle des anciens et modernes*. Voor Smit is een epos alleen geslaagd als het een vergelijking met het vergiliaanse model kan doorstaan.[10] Zijn aandacht gaat daarbij vooral uit naar de vorm - het gebruik van alexandrijnen, het aantal boeken, de opbouw van het werk - veel minder naar de inhoud. Dat maakt hem soms blind voor interne ontwikkelingen.

Bij zijn uitvoerige bespreking van Onno Zwier van Harens *De Geusen* doet Smit juist het omgekeerde. Omdat het werk een belangrijke plaats inneemt in de evolutie van het genre in Nederland gaat Smit uitgebreid in op de ontstaansgeschiedenis. *De Geusen* is een sterk uitgebreide en aangepaste bewerking van Van Harens dichtstuk *Aan het Vaderland*, meer een lange hymne dan een aanzet tot een epos. Volgens Smit resoneert die dichterlijke vorm te veel in het eindresultaat, waardoor *De Geusen* formeel geen 'zuiver' epos is. Lia van Gemert echter wees er, in navolging van Marijke Spies, op dat Smit zijn conclusie enkel baseerde op het vergiliaanse epos, waarin het grote verhaal van universele waarheden centraal staat. Hij verloor uit het oog dat sommige auteurs een andere beroemde epische dichter navolgden: Lucanus. Van Haren lijkt met *De Geusen* inderdaad het lucaanse model te benaderen: 'de leerrijke verdichting van realistische stof, vaak ontleend aan een recente oorlog'.[11] Smit concludeert: 'Hoewel *De Geusen* in wezen nauwelijks iets van een epos hebben, moeten zij vanwege de uitgesproken bedoeling van de dichter toch als een verschijningsvorm van het genre worden aangemerkt'.[12] Dit lijkt een drogreden. Temeer daar Smit bij andere epen consequent is in zijn oordeel: als de tekst niet aan de formele kenmerken van het epos beantwoordt, dan is het een mislukt epos, ongeacht de intentie van de auteur. Maar omdat Smit ziet dat Van Harens werk inhoudelijk enigszins aansluit bij de traditie van *Aeneïs*, in die zin dat het het ontstaan van de natie beschrijft en bejubelt en omdat precies dat inhoudelijke aspect van het epos na het verschijnen van *De Geusen* wordt nagevolgd in vele andere epen, schrijft Smit: het heeft 'de stoot

10 Marijke Spies wees al in 1977 op een aantal tekortkomingen van Smits aanpak (Spies, 'Het epos in de 17e eeuw in Nederland'). Lia van Gemert beklemtoont dat dichters het epos niet als keurslijf beschouwden ('Verreziende helden', 390).

11 Van Gemert, 'Echte helden zie je zelden', 31. Voor een korte vergelijking tussen beide Romeinse auteurs, zie J.H. Brouwers, 'Vergilius en Lucanus'.

12 Smit, *Kalliope*, vol II, 695.

gegeven tot de opkomst van een vaderlands historie-epos'.[13] Door aldus de auteursintentie zijn betoog binnen te smokkelen kan Smit *De Geusen* tot epos uitroepen om vervolgens de populariteit van het subgenre 'vaderlands historie-epos' te duiden. Erkenning van een lucaanse traditie naast een vergiliaanse had deze kunstgreep overbodig kunnen maken.

Het vaderlands historie-epos: de Bataafse mythe

Hiervoor heb ik het laat-achttiende-eeuwse vaderlandse historie-epos in twee groepen verdeeld. De ene groep greep terug naar de Bataafse mythe, de andere naar de nationale geschiedenis. De eerste omvat twee epen: *Klaudius Civilis* (1774) van Frans van Steenwijk en *Germanicus* (1779) van Lucretia Wilhelmina van Merken.

De Bataafse mythe was de ontstaansmythe van het Bataafse volk tijdens de Oudheid. Tacitus vermeldt dat er onder de Chatten, een Germaanse stam, een onderlinge twist ontstond, waarna een gedeelte van de stam vertrok en zich vestigde in het huidige Nederland. In de loop van de zestiende en zeventiende eeuw ontwikkelden humanistische denkers, waaronder Hugo de Groot, het beeld van een protomoderne staat der Batavieren of Bataven, genoemd naar de prins die hun volk naar Nederland geleid had, Bato. Deze staat was er één van orde en harmonie, met een staatssysteem dat verdacht veel leek op dat van de Republiek. De Bataven onderscheidden zich van de andere Germaanse stammen door hun zin voor overleg, hun drang naar vrede, en de moed en wilskracht om hun vrijheid te verdedigen.[14]

Het is opmerkelijk dat de epen die teruggrijpen naar de Bataafse mythe niet het verhaal vertellen van Bato, zoals Hooft dat wel gedaan had in zijn tragedie *Baeto* (1617). Dat verhaal vertoont nochtans erg veel parallellen met het verhaal van Aeneas - beiden zijn prinsen die hun oorspronkelijke vaderland moeten verlaten en na vele omzwervingen een nieuwe natie stichten. Er was weliswaar al een Nederlandse epische tekst over Bato, *Batavias, of Bataafsche Aeneas* (1648) van Lambert van den Bos, maar het is weinig waarschijnlijk dat Van Steenwijk en Van Merken die tekst als het onovertrefbare epos over Bato

13 Ibidem, 696.

14 Zie over de Bataafse mythe onder andere: Van der Woud, *De Bataafse hut* en populariserender: Teitler, *De opstand der 'Batavieren'*; specifiek over de bijdrage van Hugo de Groot: de editie van diens traktaat door G.C. Molewijk, *De Oudheid van de Bataafse nu Hollandse Republiek*. In deze republiek is 'vrijheid' een centraal begrip, maar dit concept werd in verschillende politieke betekenissen gebruikt. In *Van Bartholomeusnacht tot Bataafse opstand* bij voorbeeld construeert Henk Duits de staatsgezinde opvatting van de ware vrijheid als een politieke situatie zonder stadhouder; uit de titel van zijn eerste epos alleen al mag blijken dat een orangist als Joannes Nomsz de stadhouder als een noodzakelijke voorwaarde zag voor vrijheid: *Willem de Eerste, of de grondlegging der Nederlandsche vryheid*. Zie over vrijheid: Haitsma Mulier en Velema, *Vrijheid*.

beschouwden, als ze er al vertrouwd mee waren. Het werk lijkt in eigen tijd weinig bekendheid verworven te hebben en er is na de eerste druk van 1648 geen enkele herdruk verschenen.[15] Smit concludeert ietwat neerbuigend over het epos en zijn auteur: '*ut desint vires, tamen est laudanda voluntas* (al faalt de kracht, de wil is prijzenswaard)'.[16]

Beide achttiende-eeuwse teksten verwijzen naar opstanden tegen het machtige Rome. Van Steenwijk behandelt de opstand van Claudius Civilis in 69-70 AD, die door Tacitus in zijn *Historiae* beschreven is. Uiteraard is Civilis' opstand gerechtvaardigd - de Romeinen hadden het vredesverdrag met de Bataven geschonden, dat erkent ook Tacitus tot op zekere hoogte - maar de uitkomst van het verhaal is anders: bij Tacitus onderhandelt Civilis over zijn overgave, bij Van Steenwijk over een herstel van het vredesverdrag. Een ander verschil tussen Tacitus' versie en die van Van Steenwijk is tekenend: bij Tacitus is Civilis vanaf het begin eenogig; Van Steenwijk beschrijft in de zevende zang hoe Civilis tijdens een veldslag zwaargewond afgevoerd wordt. 'Schoon hy een oog verliest, hyzelf gaat niet verloren'.[17] Van Steenwijks Civilis is bereid offers te brengen voor de vrijheid van het vaderland. Het beeld van de Bataven (en dus van de Nederlanders) dat hieruit naar voren komt is er één van vredesverlangen, compromis, welwillendheid, maar ook van vastberadenheid om de onderhandelde vrede en vrijheid te verdedigen.

Ook in de *Germanicus* van Van Merken staat een opstand centraal, maar hier is de uitgangspositie veel complexer. Germanicus was de Romeinse veldheer die in drie veldtochten (in de jaren 14, 15, en 16) een Germaanse opstand neersloeg. Bij Van Steenwijk zijn de Romeinen de wrede vijanden, maar in Van Merkens epos strijden de Bataven aan de zijde van Germanicus, 'de vriend der Batavieren'.[18] Bij Van Steenwijk zijn de Bataven een Germaanse stam, maar Van Merken maakt een duidelijk onderscheid tussen aan de ene kant de onbeschaafde, ruwe Germanen, die onder leiding van Arminius, 'schendende eer en eed'[19], de *pax romana* verwerpen, en aan de andere kant de vredelievende, rechtvaardige Bataven, die, aangevoerd door Cariovalda, aan de zijde van de Romeinse veldheer strijden.

> 't Bataafsche volk verdient nog hooger waardigheden.
> Dus spreekt Germanicus. Hunne onwrikbre trouw

15 Smit, *Kalliope*, vol. I, 447.
16 Ibidem, 511.
17 Van Steenwijk, *Klaudius Civilis*, 158.
18 Van Merken, *Germanicus*, vi.
19 Ibidem, 3.

> En fiere dapperheid versterken 't staatsgebouw.
> Zy strekten meer dan eens myn vadren tot behoeders;
> En Rome noemt, met recht, de Batavieren broeders.[20]

De broederband en vaderlandsliefde gaan zelfs zo diep dat de Bataven het ultieme offer brengen: Cariovalda, de vorst van de Bataven, sneuvelt in de strijd: ‘Hy sneuvelt gloriryk die sneuvelt in zyn wapen’.[21] Terwijl bij Frans van Steenwijk de Romeinen de onderdrukkers zijn, beklemtoont Lucretia Wilhelmina van Merken het verbond tussen de geciviliseerde Bataven en de Romeinen. In beide gevallen schrikken de Bataven niet terug voor noodzakelijk geweld, en in beide gevallen wordt het overlegmodel van de Bataafse samenleving verheerlijkt. Smit stelt beide epen tegenover elkaar, en hoewel hij erkent dat de tegenstelling niet absoluut is, beklemtoont hij toch vooral het negatieve beeld dat Van Steenwijk van de Romeinen schept.[22] Hij gaat daarbij te snel voorbij aan het feit dat Claudius Civilis in het epos vredesonderhandelingen aangaat om het geschonden verdrag te herstellen. De vrede waarover zowel Van Merken als Van Steenwijk het hebben is niet de onderwerping van een verliezer aan een overwinnaar, maar een onderhandelde vrede tussen gelijkwaardige partners.

Het vaderlandse verleden dat in beide epen geconstrueerd wordt, schetst een beeld van de vroegste Nederlanders als vredelievend, maar moedig in de strijd. In beide epen is er sprake van een opstand, maar de aard van de opstand is verschillend. In *Klaudius Civilis* wordt een verdrag geschonden, en is de opstand van de Bataven gerechtvaardigd: de opstandelingen zijn de protagonisten, die streven naar een herstel van het verdrag (ook al wordt daarvoor de historische waarheid, of althans Tacitus' versie daarvan, enigszins geweld aangedaan). In *Germanicus* daarentegen zijn de opstandelingen de antagonisten: hier zijn het de Germanen die het verdrag schenden. Hoewel de Bataven in de twee epen een tegengestelde rol lijken te spelen, blijken ze in beide gevallen op te treden tegen de schending van het verdrag. Veel meer dan een zoektocht naar de wortels van de Nederlandse beschaving zijn deze epen projecties van de ideale Nederlandse samenleving en haar burgers in de achttiende eeuw: een vredelievende natie die haar welvaart baseert op handel en overleg.

Daardoor sluiten zij dichter aan bij het vergiliaanse epos: er wordt uiting gegeven aan een ‘universele waarheid’ over het Nederlandse volk, en daarbij is de historische accuraatheid van ondergeschikt belang. Beide epen

20 Ibidem, 193.
21 Ibidem, 282.
22 Smit, *Kalliope*, vol II, 761-764.

zijn echter wel degelijk gebaseerd op historische gebeurtenissen (waardoor ze niet helemaal los staan van de lucaanse traditie) - in beide gevallen verhaald door Tacitus - maar de weinige bevestigde feiten vormen de basis voor een veel groter en breder uitgesponnen narratief.

Het vaderlands historie-epos: nationale geschiedenis

In 1771 verscheen de eerste druk van *De Geusen* van Onno Zwier van Haren. Van Haren was een in onmin gevallen politicus en edelman: nadat hij tot in de hoogste kringen invloedrijk was geweest, zorgde een breed uitgesmeerd incestschandaal voor zijn politieke en maatschappelijke val. Hoewel de beschuldigingen vooral als een politieke afrekening kunnen beschouwd worden, blijft het zo dat Van Harens naam nooit gezuiverd is. W.A.P. Smit drukt zich voorzichtig uit en stelt dat 'Onno Zwier ten opzichte van zijn dochters niet altijd voldoende de vereiste decentie in acht heeft genomen'.[23] Van Haren probeerde met bijzonder vaderlandslievende poëzie zijn reputatie te herstellen, maar slaagde daar, ondanks het grote succes van *De Geusen*, niet in. *De Geusen* kende verschillende herdrukken, en werd in 1785 door Bilderdijk in een bewerkte versie nogmaals uitgegeven.[24] Het was niet het eerste epos dat teruggreep naar het nationale verleden. Eerder was er al onder andere het werk van Lambert van den Bos. Aan het eind van de zeventiende eeuw hadden Pieter Rabus en later ook Lucas Rotgans uit de contemporaine geschiedenis geput en Willem III bezongen. Van Harens broer, Willem, had in 1741 met *Gevallen van Friso* een Friese versie van de Bataafse mythe opgeroepen. Maar *De Geusen* was veel succesvoller dan die voorgangers. W.A.P. Smit benadrukt het belang van *De Geusen* voor de ontwikkeling van het genre. 'Niet naar de vorm; daarvan is in geen enkel opzicht iets merkbaar. Maar wel met betrekking tot de aard van de gekozen stof'.[25]

Van Haren beschouwde die stof, de vaderlandse geschiedenis, als bekend, maar voegde toch een 'Historisch verhaal' toe voor het eigenlijke epos. In dat 'Historisch verhaal' wordt kort de geschiedenis van de geuzen geschetst, van de beroemde uitspaak 'ce ne sont que des gueux' (1566) tot Willems aankomst in Enkhuizen in 1572: 'waar na de naam van *Geusen* ophoud'.[26] Dit verhaal is uiterst bondig, maar het bevat een lijst van de watergeuzen die de overtocht van Engeland naar Holland maakten, wat de lezer houvast biedt bij de stortvloed aan namen in het epos. De slotzin van het 'Historisch verhaal'

23 Ibidem, 659.
24 Ik maak gebruik van de derde druk (1776), de laatste druk die Van Haren zelf nog geredigeerd heeft.
25 Smit, *Kalliope*, vol II, 696.
26 Van Haren, *De Geusen*, ongenummerde bladzijden.

benadrukt de waarheid van het vertelde, maar Van Haren houdt een slag om de arm: ‘Dit zyn de gebeurtenissen, welke men zig heeft voorgesteld, zo veel doenlyk in een verzaameld, te verhaalen: in dat verhaal, overal, *daar het moogelyk is geweest*, de Historische waarheid nooyt uit het oog verliesende’.[27]

Na de literaire tekst volgen ook nog eens ‘Opheldering’[28], waarin Van Haren dieper ingaat op historische kwesties, en daarbij graag zijn geleerdheid tentoonspreidt: het epos opent met een verwijzing naar de Nijl, in de opheldering daarbij gaat Van Haren in op de antieke en meer contemporaine theorieën over de oorzaak van de vruchtbaarheid van de gebieden aan de oevers van de Nijl. Deze verwijzing vormt het beginpunt voor een homerische vergelijking. De Nijl is op haar breedst en brengt kostbaar water naar het dorre land, maar dan trekt het water terug: ‘Het water vlucht, en vuyle slikken / Bedekken al wat kan bezaeyd!’[29] De wanhoop slaat toe, maar net dan schijnt de zon en blijkt dat de zandgrond bijzonder vruchtbaar geworden is. ‘Zo dekt d' Al-Magtig syne wegen!’[30] Als de ontreddering het grootst is, blijkt het lijden nuttig te zijn geweest.

> Aldus, eer dat in uwe Steeden,
> ô Thans gelukkig Nederland,
> De hoorn van overvloed zal treeden,
> Gedragen door de Vryheids hand;
> Moet eerst de dood van duizend Helden,
> Beschermers uwer laage velden,
> Uw Land bezoedelen met bloed;
> En 't geen de mensch niet kon verzinnen,
> Uw Vryheid zal door dwang beginnen,
> In Burgerstaat en in Gemoed![31]

Zoals de Nijl eerst verwoestend uithaalt om daarna vruchtbare grond te leveren, zo moet Nederland eerst lijden voordat ze vrij kan zijn en overvloed kan kennen. Die vrijheid kan er pas komen door de offerdood van duizend helden. Op het eind van het epos wordt de zelfopoffering voor het vaderland opnieuw benadrukt. Willem van Oranje zet voet aan wal in Enkhuizen, en richt zich devoot tot God: ‘ô God, die Dwingelanden toomt! / Uw Dienst en Vrijheid

27 Ibidem, (mijn cursivering, CM).
28 Van Haren, *De Geusen*, 159-240.
29 Ibidem, 1.
30 Ibidem, 2.
31 Ibidem, 2.

eyscht myn leeven! / Voor haar is 't my door U gegeeven!'[32] Oranje krijgt hier zelfs messiaanse trekjes: hij weet dat hij het ultieme offer zal moeten brengen, maar vastberaden en moedig neemt hij zijn goddelijke missie op.

Die missie is het herstel van rechten en vrijheid. Het epos begint in 1566, wanneer het Eedverbond der Edelen onder leiding van Brederode hun smeekschrift aanbieden aan Margaretha van Parma, 'Reeds zyn de Rechten weg genoomen / En Wetten doof op uw geklag!'[33] Het smeekschrift van de edelen richtte zich niet tegen de koning of de Kerk, maar tegen de Inquisitie, omdat die de instellingen van het land onderuit haalde.[34] Filips II wordt afgebeeld als 'Een vorst die met syn' eeden spot!'[35] De geuzen bieden weerstand: 'd'onverzaaghdheid is in d'oogen, / En 't vaderland in ieders ziel!'[36]

De geuzen tonen zich de waardige erfgenamen van de Bataven: ook zij zijn trouw aan het gesloten verdrag en verdedigen dat verdrag moedig tegen zij die het schenden. In de zesde zang wordt beschreven hoe Rochus Meeuwszen Den Briel van een Spaanse overrompeling hield door een sluis te breken en zo het land onder water te zetten. In zijn lof voor Rochus maakt Van Haren de parallel expliciet: 'Nogtans gaat Rochus altyd leeven, / Nu myne Lier dien naam zal kleeven, / Aan Nassau, Geus, en Batavier'.[37]

Deze Rochus Meeuwszen is een gewone burgerman, geen man van aanzien en stand, en dus niet bepaald geschikt als held zoals in het traditionele vergiliaanse epos. Van Haren verheft hem echter postuum als het ware in de adelstand:

> Schoon uw Geslagt niet was verheeven,
> Uw hart en moed zal luister geeven,
> Meer als geboorte leenen kan!
> En hy, dien eerst de Deugd bekoorde
> En d'Eer tot dapp're daaden spoorde,
> Was d'eerst' en waardigst' Edelman![38]

32 Ibidem, 158.
33 Ibidem, 3.
34 'The Petition of Compromise denounced only the Inquisition, not the king, royal administration, or Church. By focusing exclusively on the Inquisition, the challengers to royal authority could claim that they were not rebelling against king or Church, and that their sole concern was to dismantle an institution universally hated in the Low Countries. But, at the same time, the petitioners made clear that in their eyes the Inquisition was not only evil but subversive of law and society, in conflict with both the rights and the well-being of the country'. (Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 145-146).
35 Van Haren, *De Geusen*, 6.
36 Ibidem, 10.
37 Ibidem, 39.
38 Ibidem, 38.

Dit is echter niet de enige keer dat Van Haren afwijkt van de strenge regels van het vergiliaanse epos - zelfs buiten Smits formele bepalingen. Nagenoeg de gehele tweeëntwintigste zang[39] is gewijd aan de zorgen van Rosemond, de echtgenote van schipper De Lange. Er woedt een storm over de Noordzee, en Rosemond wacht in Veere angstig het einde van de storm af. Van Haren vertelt dat zij acht jaar eerder met De Lange getrouwd is, en dat zij sindsdien vaak op hem gewacht heeft, terwijl hij op zee werkte. Vervolgens roept hij het gezinsgeluk op als ze dan wel samen waren:

> Hoe vrolyk gleeden dan all' uuren,
> Van 't weer vereende jonge Paar!
> Als in de kôu, by goede vuuren,
> Sy tellen overwinst van 't jaar;
> Als zamen aan den disch gezeeten
> Na vroeg en maatig avond eeten,
> In 't langzaam naad'ren van de nacht,
> Sy hem verhaald wat kinders zeyden,
> Die om syn afzyn dikwyls schreyden,
> En welke troosten zy bedacht.[40]

Hun huwelijksgeluk is eenvoudig: door hard werken en sober leven - het avondmaal is vroeg en matig - vormen ze een voorspoedig en liefdevol gezin. Maar dat wordt wreed verstoord door de ‘Dwinglandy’: ‘als nu God, getergd door Spanje, / De Vryheid toonde by Oranje, / Was sy 't, die moedig haren Man / Vermaand', in kryg, en in gevaaren, / Syn bloed en leeven niet te spaaren, / Daar God en Land hem roepen kan’.[41] Zij beseft dat het geluk van hun gezin samenhangt met godsdienst, vaderland, en Oranje. Vervolgens bezingt Van Haren uitgebreid de geneugten van het eenvoudige leven: ‘Geen Weelde stoord de rust van 't leeven, / Het zeedig huys is net en klein’.[42] Rosemond maakt zich zorgen om haar man, maar keert dan haar gedachten naar haar kinderen, en vertrouwt op God voor de goede afloop: ‘En hare slaap is ook gerust!’[43]

We zijn hier veraf van de ‘grote daden, verricht door personen van aanzien en naam’.[44] Van Haren brengt het grote gebeuren van de Nederlandse

39 Ibidem, 140-145.
40 Ibidem, 141.
41 Ibidem, 142.
42 Ibidem, 143.
43 Ibidem, 145.
44 Smit, *Kalliope*, vol. I, 141.

Opstand tot in de huiskamer. In de zesde zang van de Ilias is er de befaamde scène waarin Hector afscheid neemt van Andromachè en zijn zoontje Astyanax, waarin een soortgelijk gezinsgeluk lijkt naar voren te komen. Maar in de Iliasscène draait alles rond Hector. Niet toevallig zijn Hectors laatste woorden aan zijn vrouw: ‘Ga gij naar huis en zorg voor uw eigen werk, het weefgetouw en 't spinnewiel, en gelast de slavinnen aan het werk te gaan. De oorlog is de taak der mannen, van allen, die in Troje wonen, en van mij het meest’.[45] Hoe anders is het bij Van Haren: hier is het op het initiatief van Rosemond dat De Lange de wapens opneemt, hier is het Rosemond zelf die de huishoudelijke taken op zich neemt: geen slavinnen in dit nederig huishouden. Het huisgezin dat Van Haren schept lijkt maar weinig op het aristocratische gezin van Hector. Kleinschaligheid staat hier centraal, godsvrucht is een integraal deel van zowel de vaderlandsliefde als het dagelijkse leven.

Simon Schama (1987) heeft huiselijkheid als een kernelement van de Nederlandse identiteit in de zeventiende eeuw beschreven. Hij baseerde zich daarvoor vooral op het beeld dat de Nederlanders van zichzelf schetsten (voornamelijk in schilderkunst), maar dat is ook waar het hier om draait, zij het ruim een eeuw later (en in literatuur in plaats van schilderkunst). Schama's portret van de Nederlander als sobere, vrome gezinsman blijkt ook van toepassing op het beeld dat (de aristocraat) Van Haren schetst.[46] Johannes en Krol suggereren dat dit in de ogen van de achttiende-eeuwse Nederlanders typisch Nederlands was.[47] Van Haren smokkelde in de vroege jaren 1770 inderdaad het huisgezin binnen in het epos.

En hij vond daarin navolging. In 1790 publiceerde Petronella Moens *Hugo de Groot*. De titel van het werk is enigszins misleidend: de echte held van het werk is Maria van Reigersberch, de echtgenote van De Groot. Het epos begint met De Groots gevangenschap, en de klemtoon ligt meteen op Van Reigersberch, en haar trouwe dienstmeisje Elsje van Houweningen. Zij hebben de ontsnapping van De Groot uitgedacht en uitgevoerd. Hugo de Groot wordt doorheen het hele werk bewierookt en geëerd, maar hij is opvallend passief. Zijn politiek-filosofische werk wordt bejubeld (niet verklaard of toegelicht), maar hij wordt vooral als slachtoffer van de tirannie van Maurits van Nassau beschreven. Moens was erg patriottisch.[48] Het militante anti-orangisme van

45 Homerus, *Ilias*, 103.

46 Lisa Jardine heeft in *Gedeelde weelde* belangrijke nuances aangebracht, maar dat neemt niet weg dat het beeld dat de Nederlanders van zichzelf ontwierpen daadwerkelijk nauw aansluit bij het beeld dat Schama in *The Embarrassment of Riches* reconstrueerde.

47 Johannes, *De lof der aalbessen*; Krol, *De smaak der natie*.

48 Zie over Moens: Veltman - van den Bos, *Petronella Moens, De Vriendin van 't Vaderland*.

dit epos is opmerkelijk, aangezien het werk verscheen in 1790, tijdens de orangistische restauratie na de patriottentijd.

Er wordt nauwelijks inhoudelijke argumentatie naar voren gebracht: Maurits is de dwingeland, De Groot is het slachtoffer van de tirannie. Dat komt in het epos vooral tot uiting door de gevangenschap van De Groot, waardoor hij ook geen toegang meer heeft tot het normale gezinsleven. En net dat gemis lijkt het kernthema van Moens' epos te zijn. Lia van Gemert heeft het epos getypeerd als 'een *gegenderd* genre, waarin culturele gedragspatronen worden opgevoerd als vanzelfsprekende seksegebonden identiteiten voor mannen en vrouwen'.[49] Moens wijkt daar niet van af, maar het is wel opvallend dat de klemtoon hier niet langer ligt op de epische held als 'een krachtige leider met een fundamentele taak voor het openbaar belang'[50], maar het gezinsleven van die krachtige leider, waarbij in dit geval de meest actieve rol weggelegd is voor de vrouwen binnen het huishouden. Ook Van Gemert beklemtoont dat De Groot en Van Reigersberch 'de ideale eigenschappen: godsvrucht, moed en trouwe liefde voor vaderland en gezin'[51] belichamen. Volgens haar echter blijft Maria van Reigersberch een ondergeschikte rol spelen, omdat ze enkel in haar rol als echtgenote en spreekbuis van De Groot verschijnt. Het feit dat Moens Van Reigersberch presenteert als de bedenkster van de ontsnappingslist, verleent haar mijns inziens een veel actievere rol. De Groot wordt inderdaad, zoals Van Gemert stelt, verheerlijkt, maar de emotionele geladenheid van Van Reigersberch lijkt mij veel groter te zijn[52]: zoals Van Gemert aanhaalt, is De Groot geen leider, maar een eerder hulpeloze balling; degene die actie onderneemt is zijn echtgenote.

Het zou te ver gaan om uit dit ene voorbeeld te concluderen dat het gegenderde karakter van het epos veranderde in de late achttiende eeuw (al lijkt Adriana van Overstratens *Jacoba van Beieren* iets soortgelijks te suggereren - Van Overstraten was overigens een van Moens' intimi in deze periode[53]). Ik stel wel vast dat de Nederlandse kernwaarden - godsvrucht, moed, vaderlandsliefde, eenvoud en trouw - niet langer voorbehouden zijn aan een kleine mannelijke elite, maar ook belichaamd worden door gewone burgers (zoals Rochus Meeuwszen). Bovendien zijn die waarden onlosmakelijk verbonden met het

49 Van Gemert, 'Echte helden zie je zelden', 23.
50 Ibidem, 23.
51 Ibidem, 37.
52 Van Gemert wijt die emotionele lading aan de 'emotioneel-morele inslag' van het lucaanse epos ('Echte helden zie je zelden', 38). Ik wil die interpretatie zeker niet tegenspreken, maar aanvullen met de suggestie dat Moens' poëtica beïnvloed was door het sentimentalisme.
53 Veltman - van den Bos, *Petronella Moens, De Vriendin van 't Vaderland*.

eenvoudige en sobere gezin, waarin vrouwen een prominente, actieve en doorslaggevende rol spelen.

Tot slot: een tegenvoorbeeld?

In het epos van de late achttiende eeuw werd teruggegrepen naar het verleden. Dat verleden werd gebruikt als richtlijn voor het heden: de Nederlandse epische held was een vredelievende held, die zijn vrijheid baseerde op onderhandelingen en compromis. Als dat compromis overtreden werd, was de Nederlander niet bang om de vrijheid te verdedigen, want de vrijheid was niet alleen een verworvenheid van het vaderland, maar ook en vooral een goddelijk voorrecht. Daarom waren God en Nederland een eenheid[54], die sinds de Tachtigjarige Oorlog kundig door Oranje geleid werd. Tijdens en na de patriottentijd stond Oranje ter discussie, vooral in de figuur van Maurits van Nassau, omdat hij zijn eigen persoonlijke macht boven het welzijn van de natie gesteld zou hebben: hij had het verdrag verbroken. De epen gaan telkens uit van het naleven van zo'n verdrag, gebaseerd op wederzijds respect. Uitspattingen van weelde of te grote politieke ambities worden sterk veroordeeld: vrome eenvoud is het ideaal. Dat ideaal wordt belichaamd door sterke figuren, ontleend aan de eigen vaderlandse geschiedenis, maar ook - en steeds vaker - door het gezin.[55] Smits definitie van een epos als een dichtwerk 'dat in verheven stijl vertelt over grote daden, verricht door personen van aanzien en naam'[56] wordt op die manier opengetrokken: het gaat niet langer om die ene epische held. Bovendien worden de grote daden ontleend aan de vaderlandse geschiedenis, waardoor - in Van Gemerts termen - het vergiliaanse model verruild wordt voor het lucaanse.

De Spanjaerdt binnen Rotterdam van Adriaen van der Vliet lijkt echter op een nog radicalere manier af te wijken van het vergiliaanse model dat Smit geschetst heeft. Het gaat niet alleen niet om één centrale held, het lijkt bovendien niet eens om 'grote daden' te gaan. Integendeel: *De Spanjaerdt binnen Rotterdam* beschrijft een dieptepunt in de Rotterdamse en bij uitbreiding Nederlandse geschiedenis: de inname van Rotterdam door Spaanse troepen in 1572 en de daarop volgende periode van terreur en angst in de stad. Deze relatief korte tekst lijkt dus helemaal niet te passen in Smits opzet. Toch weigert Smit de tekst af te doen als een mislukt epos. Opnieuw doet hij

54 Daarbij ging men zelfs zo ver een parallel te trekken tussen het Nederlandse volk en de Oud-Testamentische Hebreeuwen (zie onder andere Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, 93-125).

55 Van der Haven stelt iets vergelijkbaars vast: 'The transformation of the classical epic hero with his sublime and superior character to a humble servant of his own people and the fatherland appears to be an important aspect of enlightened heroism in the discussed epic texts' ('Patriotism and Bellicism', 71)

56 Smit, *Kalliope*, vol. I, 141.

een beroep op de auteursintentie: ‘Naar mijn mening is het precies geworden wat de auteur bedoelde: een kroniek met zoveel mogelijk de allure van een epos, maar zonder de pretentie er werkelijk een te zijn’.[57] Ook in dit geval kan Smits' probleem opgelost worden door te wijzen op de lucaanse traditie: ‘de leerrijke verdichting van realistische stof, vaak ontleend aan een recente oorlog’.[58] Hoewel Smit meent dat Van der Vliets epos niet past bij de religieus-stichtelijke toon van zijn andere werk - postuum verzameld in *Vruchten der dichtlievendheid* (1779) - valt de diep religieuze inslag van *De Spanjaerdt binnen Rotterdam* op. In de openingsverzen al wordt de uiteindelijke aftocht van de Spaanse bezetter toegeschreven aan ‘Gods handt’ die ‘de Vryheit met den Godsdienst in haer vesten’ bracht.[59] Ook de slotverzen staan in het teken van de goddelijke bescherming:

> Wy mede, goede Godt! die, na dien angst en druk,
> Hebt Rotterdam gevoert ten toppunt van 't geluk;
> Beschouwt met wakend oog; en, nu twee honderdt jaren
> Het by de vryheit, en den Godsdienst woudt bewaren;
> Wy buigen ons voor uw verheven Majesteit.
> Wy danken uwen Naem, voor uw goeddadigheit,
> En vlechten bloemen, die den hof der Dichtkunst sieren,
> Tot Jubelkranssen, daer wy 't eeuwgetyde vieren.
> Blyf verder Rotterdam met uwe gunste by.
> Uw dierbre zegen ruste op zyne Burgery;
> Schoon meenigmael verbeurt door averechtsen wandel.
> De voorspoed vergezell' zyn uitgestrekten handel.
> Ach! dat het groeij' en bloeij'; en onder 't wys bestuur
> Der overheit, den tydt, in rust en vreê verduur'![60]

Van der Vliet hinkt wel op twee gedachten: aan de ene kant wordt het katholicisme van Filips II ‘dweepziek bygeloof’ genoemd[61]; aan de andere verwijst Van der Vliet ook naar de katholieke beschermheilige van Rotterdam, Sint-Laurens.[62] Dit laatste lijkt echter vooral een uiting te zijn van de Nederlandse zin voor tolerantie en compromis, in tegenstelling tot de onbuigzaamheid van de Inquisitie.

57 Smit, *Kalliope*, vol. II, 704.
58 Van Gemert, ‘Echte helden zie je zelden’, 31.
59 Van der Vliet, *De Spanjaerdt binnen Rotterdam*, 7.
60 Ibidem, 55-56.
61 Ibidem, 9.
62 Ibidem, 12.

Van der Vliet beklemtoont dat het Nederlandse volk ‘Hunn' Godt en Koning, tot den bedelzak, getrouw’[63] blijven, maar dat het Filips is ‘die langer aen geen' eedt wil zyn gebonden’.[64] Dat eerloze verraad wordt in *De Spanjaerdt binnen Rotterdam* belichaamd door ‘Bossu, die, schoon zyn hert van moordt, / En wraekzucht zwanger gaet, zich zelven weet te dragen, / Als of hy yders gunst, door heusheit, wou bejagen’.[65] Deze Bossu - een (Zuid-) Nederlander nota bene - stond aan het hoofd van de Spaanse troepen. Op een nacht wordt hij in een droom bezocht door de Inquisitie, die de gedaante van Sint-Laurens had aangenomen, en hem aanmaant ‘'t Roomsch geloof in 't kettersch Rotterdam’ te verdedigen.[66] Smit noemt deze uiting van het merveilleux overbodig en ongeloofwaardig. Volgens hem is het een toegeving van Van der Vliet aan de conventies van het epos.[67] De goddelijke opdracht in een droom is inderdaad een gemeenplaats in het epos, maar in dit geval is het niet de held die bezocht wordt, maar de vijand. Die vijand wordt in de droom misleid door de Inquisitie, die met leugens over de vermeende vervolging van katholieken Bossu aanspoort Rotterdam te straffen. Bovendien geeft de Inquisitie hem de raad vriendelijkheid en toegeeflijkheid te veinzen om de stad binnen te geraken. Van der Vliet gebruikt hier de topos van de droom op een inventieve en creatieve manier om de verraderlijkheid van de Spanjaarden in de verf te zetten.

De list slaagt: Bossu slaagt erin het stadsbestuur door zijn mooipraterij (‘welsprekenheit’[68]) tot een verdrag te bewegen: Bossu mag zijn troepen door de stad laten trekken, op voorwaarde dat dat in kleine groepen en met ongeladen geweren gebeurt. Bossu schendt het verdrag en de stad wordt onder de voet gelopen, ondanks het heftig verweer van ‘den Burgerheer, die, tegen de overmagt, / Bataefsche dapperheit, in 't heet gevecht, laet blyken’.[69] Die burgerheer blijkt ook in deze tekst een gezinsman te zijn: ‘De Burgers spoên naer huis, waer de arme vrouw, gemat / Van angst en vrees, haer' gade in bevende armen vat, / En tranen schreit van vreugdt, nu zy, na lang verlangen, / Hem levende ziet, en by hun kinders mag ontfangen’.[70] De burgers verschansen zich, en gaan zelfs in deze hachelijke omstandigheden het gesprek aan met de Spanjaarden: ze bereiken een overeenkomst waarbij zij zich overgeven, maar zodra de deur geopend wordt vallen de Spanjaarden hen aan en vermoorden de

63 Ibidem, 9.
64 Ibidem, 9.
65 Ibidem, 15.
66 Ibidem, 15.
67 Smit, *Kalliope*, vol. II, 704.
68 Van der Vliet, *De Spanjaerdt binnen Rotterdam*, 21.
69 Ibidem, 27.
70 Ibidem, 29.

weerloze mannen, vrouwen en kinderen.

Aan het begin van het derde boek wordt de allegorische figuur van de Rotterdamse stedemaagd bezocht door een engel die haar aanmaant: ‘Draeg u geduldig in dit leet en ongeval, / Na kort verloop van tydt zich Godt ontfermen zal’.[71] Van der Vliet laat er vervolgens weinig twijfel over bestaan dat deze God geen katholieke god is. Een voormalige katholieke priester werd belaagd door Spaanse Inquisiteurs omdat hij de gelofte van het celibaat verbroken had, maar hij schotelde hen een copieuze maaltijd voor, overgoten met wijn. Hijzelf onthield zich echter van spijs en drank, waardoor hij nuchter bleef en wist te ontsnappen. De paapse geweldenaars werden op die manier verschalkt door hun eigen zwakte: weelde en wellust.

Geleidelijk aan sijpelen echter ook positieve berichten door over ‘Hoe Neêrlands hoop, naest Godt, Oranje, staet gereed / Om met een Leger af te komen, en het leet, / Van dit vertrapt gewest, met 's Hemels hulp, te wreken’.[72] Na een laatste verraderlijke moord op de minnares van een Spaans edelman door die edelman zelf ‘om andren haren schoot / Te ontzeggen’ trekken de Spanjaarden uiteindelijk weg uit de stad.

Hoewel drie boeken - 56 bladzijden - naar epische maatstaven nogal kort is, beantwoordt Van der Vliets werk aan de formele voorwaarden van het epos, erkent ook Smit.[73] Inhoudelijk sluit het meer aan bij de lucaanse dan bij de vergiliaanse traditie, wat ook geldt voor de andere vaderlandse historie-epen die episoden uit de nationale geschiedenis bezingen. Net als in de andere epen van de late achttiende eeuw moet de klassieke epische held plaats ruimen voor de burger die zijn gezin beschermt. *De Spanjaerdt binnen Rotterdam* wijkt echter af van al die epen doordat hier geen grote daden centraal staan, integendeel. Toch blijven de kernwaarden van de Nederlandse nationale identiteit overeind: vredelievendheid, zin voor compromis en overleg, respect voor gesloten verdragen, en de ‘Bataefsche dapperheit’ om het verdrag trouw te verdedigen.

Op die manier sluit Van der Vliets epos aan bij de andere Nederlandse epen over de vaderlandse geschiedenis. Concrete historische feiten vormen de aanleiding voor de verheerlijking van een aantal waarden die als typisch Nederlands worden beschouwd. Deze waarden worden op de geconstrueerde historische werkelijkheid geprojecteerd. Enerzijds wordt daardoor gesuggereerd dat die waarden transhistorisch zouden zijn; anderzijds wordt de historische accuraatheid van de vertelde feiten ondergeschikt aan de evocatie van die

71 Ibidem, 40.
72 Ibidem, 49.
73 Smit, *Kalliope*, vol. II, 703-705.

waarden. In deze teksten blijkt ‘historisch denken’ vanuit en in functie van een contemporain denkkader bepaald te zijn. De waarheidsclaim blijkt daarbij niet zozeer de historische feiten te betreffen als wel de Nederlandse identiteit, die vanuit het heden op poëtische wijze op het gerepresenteerde verleden als een transhistorische waarheid geprojecteerd wordt. De focus op een universele waarheid past in de vergiliaanse traditie, maar door die universele waarheid te duiden aan de hand van historische feiten vinden deze epen aansluiting bij het lucaanse epos: de verbeelde geschiedenis dient als les voor het heden.[74]

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74 Reinhart Koselleck heeft dit proces uitvoerig beschreven als ‘Historia Magistra Vitae’.

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Against Enlightened abstraction
The historical thought of Adriaan Kluit

Mathijs Boom

In the 1780s, during the upheavals of the Patriot Era, the Dutch historian Adriaan Kluit penned several heated anti-revolutionary tracts. His legalist conservative ideas were akin to those of Edmund Burke and historical jurists in the German Empire. This article analyzes the similarities between Kluit's political and historical thought. It argues that Kluit's anti-revolutionary ideas were bound up with his distrust of enlightened abstraction. Method, as much as the ideological discourse of historical jurisprudence, shaped Kluit's politics. As a pioneering empiricist and legalist historian Kluit preferred historically established rights and privileges over the universal ideals advocated by revolutionary writers.

'How could one want to raze an *old building*, which stood for centuries, to the ground, only because the *foundations*, on which the building nonetheless rested happily for so long, did not have legitimate designers, and because one cannot prove that all of its constituents, head for head, were then recognized and consulted, and agreed with it?' wrote Adriaan Kluit in 1803.[1] Like so many of his contemporaries, Kluit used the metaphors of new and old buildings, foundations, construction and destruction, in the fierce debates over new constitutions. As it was, European revolutionaries were producing those by the dozens. Why, Kluit wondered, would one only want to follow the 'new light' of the French *philosophes* if the historical roots of the state were still sound?

The Netherlands may lack a well-established conservative tradition like that of Great Britain, but in Adriaan Kluit the student of eighteenth-century historical and political thought finds an interesting counterpart to the Counter-Enlightenment thought of Edmund Burke. Like Burke, Kluit was a vehement critic of the French Revolution, a defender of established principles against the attacks of citizens willing to 'implement their philosophical reflections with violence'.[2] What were the sources of his criticism? How did Kluit's ideas take shape? Unlike Burke, Kluit was no politician. He was an acclaimed academic historian, whose political thought was bound up with his historical scholarship. In this article I will examine the characteristics of Kluit's works

1 Kluit, *Staatsregering*, vol. II, 99.
2 [Kluit], *De Rechten van den Mensch*, 110-111.

to better understand his typical, but little-studied variety of eighteenth-century historical and political thought.[3]

On the one hand, Adriaan Kluit belonged to a long line of legal and historical writing shaped by Dutch jurists such as Hugo Grotius and Ulrik Huber. In this line Kluit was merely the last, and probably most historically accurate, apologist for the sovereignty of the Dutch Republic against foreign or popular claims.[4] On the other hand Kluit, like Burke, prefigured a modern conservatism, wary of the universal claims of the Enlightenment, in favor of established customs.[5] Moreover, he was a pioneer of historical research, who combined elements of the Dutch legal tradition with ideas of the German *Aufklärer* to create his own brand of source-based historiography, critical of the sweeping claims of philosophical historiography.[6]

The historical and political thought of Adriaan Kluit, as I argue in this article, is at once heir to several older traditions of historical thought *and* part of a new, empirically driven historiography and political science developed by the scholars of the German Enlightenment that foreshadowed nineteenth-century historicism. My first concern, however, will be to understand Kluit's historical investigations from his point of view. I will begin by tracing the various sources upon which Kluit drew. His many footnotes, strewn throughout his works, help us to reconstruct the fields of scholarship within which he worked.[7] Other than many of his Dutch contemporaries, Kluit looked to the German scholars at Göttingen and Halle, rather than at French *philosophes* or English Dissenters for political guidance.[8] This defined his outlook on society and his reaction to the revolutionary events of the 1780s and 1790s, as I will show. Like the political scientists of Göttingen's university, Kluit held a legalist view of politics and an empiricist ideal for research. I will conclude by showing how these ideas fuelled his aversion to enlightened abstraction - be it universal human rights, or grand claims about the progress of society.

3 Kluit figures in many studies of the late eighteenth century. No attempt, however, has so far been made to understand the defining characteristics of his historical and political thought.

4 Leeb, *Ideological Origins of the Batavian Revolution*; Blom, 'Vrijheid in de natuurrechtelijke politieke theorie'; Veen, 'Legitimatie van de soevereiniteit'.

5 Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme*, 46-47; Velema, *Republicans*, 155-157.

6 Boutelje, *Kluit's opvattingen*, is still a good introduction to Kluit's historical works; Hugenholtz, 'Kluit en het onderwijs in de mediëvistiek' surveys Kluit's pioneering work in Dutch medievalism; Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism* best describes the world of lesser-known scholars of the German *Aufklärung*, at Halle and Göttingen most importantly, who developed an important new idea of history.

7 The evidence of Kluit's footnotes is further substantiated by the titles in Kluit's personal library, which were listed for auction after his death in 1807. (KVB: NV 783)

8 Cf. Haitsma Mulier, 'Between Humanism and Enlightenment' 180-181; and Worst, 'Constitution, History, and Natural Law', 158-161.

ADRIANUS KLUIT. DORDRACO-BATAVUS.
ANTIQUIT. ET HIST. IMPRIMIS DIPLOM. BELGII FEDER.
NEC NON HIST. FEDERUM PROF. ORD. 18 JAN. 1779.
NAT. 9 FEBR. 1735. EXTINCTUS IN EXPLOS. PULV. PYR. FATALI 12 JAN. 1807.

Fig. 1. Maria van Starkenburg, Portrait of Adriaan Kluit, professor in Antiquities and History of the Fatherland in Leiden, after a drawing by Lodewijk Portman from 1779 (1822). Source: Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden.

The fruits of the German Enlightenment

It can be tempting to judge early modern historians by our standards, to reproach them for a lack of scientific reflection, poor writing, or boring technicality. Yet their intent in writing history often differed from ours. If we want to understand Kluit's historical thought as he might have done himself, we need to consider the developments that influenced Kluit's writings and teaching: the growing interest in the history of Dutch public law in the academies, the antiquarian effort that brought about the publication of new source materials, and the more present-minded German discipline variously known as *Staatswissenschaften* or *Statistik*. Clearly, these traditions did not represent the only viable means of practicing history in the eighteenth-century Republic. Both Protestant and Catholic historians continued earlier forms of church and world histories; enlightened minds introduced philosophical histories, in which they tried to discern the great patterns of historical development; and throughout the century, the literary tradition of humanist historiography remained a prominent part of the curriculum in Dutch universities.[9] Here, however, I will limit myself to the disciplines within which Kluit worked.

The historical study of Dutch public law originated in the German academies. The German Empire had long struggled to find coherence in its legal corpus. Historically the Holy Roman Empire was made up of hundreds of political units, with various ties in a network of feudal allegiances and dynastic acquisitions, but since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 many larger principalities had won de facto sovereignty. Newly empowered, many local rulers set about centralizing state power. Their ambitions, however, sat awkwardly with the feudal principles of their legal system. The Empire, in the notorious words of the seventeenth-century jurist and philosopher Samuel Pufendorf, was a legal monstrosity. Academic jurists, first in Halle and later in Göttingen, sought to confront this tangle of historical jurisprudence through a new science of politics. The rationalist natural law theory of Christian Wolff created guiding principles for the study of historical law, while Christian Thomasius embedded the study of law into a more empirical ‘science of man’.[10]

Their scholarship found a warm welcome in the Dutch Republic, where

9 Haitsma Mulier, ‘Between Humanism and Enlightenment’, 170-175; Hay, *Annalists and Historians*, 169-185.

10 Hammerstein, *Jus und Historie;* Stolleis, *Geschichte des öffentlichen Rechts in Deutschland*, vol. I, 284-316.

studies in natural law had a long pedigree. An influx of German professors in the Netherlands throughout the eighteenth century further strengthened this relationship, and introduced many Dutch students to the study of German public law.[11] From there attention soon turned to Dutch public law. Deeper knowledge of the state's workings, scholars reasoned, could help to counter the perceived decline of the Dutch Republic. Christian Trotz, another student from Halle and one of Adriaan Kluit's teachers in Utrecht, led the way. He became the first law professor to lecture specifically on Dutch public law in the 1750s.[12]

Trotz's lectures dovetailed nicely with the work of Dutch historians such as Gerard van Loon and Frans van Mieris. Both were gentlemen scholars and experts in the antiquarian analysis of old charters, medals, and coins. Comparing material sources with contemporary accounts, they offered a critical historiography that retained belief in the value of historical knowledge against historical Pyrrhonism. Together with Jan Wagenaar, who began to publish his *History of the Fatherland* in 1749, they set a new standard for Dutch history writing.[13] At the same time their publication of the sources of Dutch history greatly expanded available documentary evidence.

Their writings recast the study of the Dutch state and its laws. Van Loon challenged whatever remained of the myth of Batavian liberty as propagated by Grotius in the early seventeenth century. Grotius claimed that, throughout the Middle Ages, the States, or a similar council of nobles, had been party to the sovereignty of the Netherlands. In his works of the 1740s Van Loon challenged this claim by arguing that the Dutch counties had originated as fiefs of the Frankish Empire, rather than as the heirs of the free Batavian warriors of ancient times, as described in Tacitus's *Germania*.[14] He unearthed documents that contradicted the history of States rights, and told a history few were willing to acknowledge. The counts had been feudal lords, owing allegiance only to the German emperor. Their legitimacy, he argued, derived solely from the power of their overlord. Only after Charles V divided his empire in 1555, and released the Dutch counties from their allegiance to the Holy Roman Empire, had the Netherlands parted with this medieval heritage.[15]

11 Roelevink, *Gedicteerd verleden*, 252-260.
12 Korbeld, *Over de vryheit van gevoelen en spreken*, 151-159; Jansen, 'De ontdekking van het vaderlandse recht', 60-65.
13 On all three historians see: Haitsma Mulier, 'Hoofsche papegaaien of redelyke schepsels'.
14 Van Loon, *Aloude Regeeringswijze*; and idem, *Dat het Graafschap van Holland altyd een Leen des Duytschen Ryks geweest is*.
15 Kluit, *Inwijingsrede*, 17-21.

Though aware of the political sensibility of his claim, Van Loon scolded those who remained ignorant of history for fear of 'discovering something unwanted'.[16] Van Mieris, who won acclaim for his collections of sources and historical writings, further expanded on Van Loon's thesis. There was not a single document, he concluded, that supported the much-vaunted history of States sovereignty. Their clear and well-documented evidence complicated any effort to legitimize the sovereignty of the States of the Republic through historical precedent. This prompted many to denounce their histories as dangerous. Their evidence was swept aside with the argument that it imperiled the standing of the Republic as a sovereign European state and invited foreign invasions of the Netherlands.[17]

The lectures of Trotz and the works of Van Loon and Van Mieris laid much of the groundwork for Adriaan Kluit's research. When Kluit took up the questions they had posed, he could rely on more advanced antiquarian techniques taught at the University of Utrecht by Petrus Wesseling and Christoph Saxe. They taught the auxiliary sciences that later furnished the tool kit of the modern historian: philology, chronology, geography, diplomatics and some form of *Statistik*. This last discipline became an important influence on the later thought of Adriaan Kluit - supplying a framework that bound together much of his earlier ideas with more immediate political relevance.[18] Kluit would even pioneer a Dutch program of *statistiek* analogous to the German variety, following the teaching of Wesseling and the Groninger jurist Everard Otto, as well as the scholars of Göttingen, where *Statistik* had matured into a full-fledged science of state.[19]

Unlike present-day statistics, *Statistik* was a mostly qualitative and descriptive science of *Land und Leute*. It became an important field of study in addition to law and history around the middle of the century. At the reform university of Göttingen, where many of the students trained to serve as public administrators, practical skills and knowledge of current affairs were valued higher than the understanding of the intricacies of German legal history.[20] *Statistik* provided a factual basis for policy making. Established in the late seventeenth century by scholars like Hermann Conring, *Statistik* had long remained a fledgling discipline, a mere appendix to Aristotelian

16 Van Loon, *Aloude Regeeringswijze*, voorbericht.
17 Haitsma Mulier, 'Between Humanism and Enlightenment'
18 Van Deursen, 'Geschiedenis en toekomstverwachting', 252.
19 Roelevink, *Gedicteerd verleden*, 259-260.
20 Rassem and Wölky, 'Zur Göttinger Schule der Staatswissenschaften', provides a good technical survey of the interrelated developments in these disciplines.

practical philosophy. It gained a new lease on life under Gottfried Achenwall at Göttingen.[21]

Achenwall combined elements from natural law, history, geography, cameralism, and *Staatsklugheit* to create an autonomous discipline. He and fellow *Statistiker* - his student August Ludwig Schlözer most prominent among them - collected information on demography, economic resources, and much else to describe the material and social conditions in various European states. They brought all the analytical tools of history to bear on the present. Göttingen was an ideal site for this type of research. The university library boasted Germany's leading collection in history, geography, political sciences and travel literature. Especially the latter was an important source for statistical knowledge. Distrustful of sweeping philosophical speculation the *Statistiker* gathered facts on anything that could be of importance to state policy and the pursuit of the common good.[22] Enthralled by the possibilities of their new science they favored gradual reform over the ideologies of enlightened universalism. Like Kluit, many *Statistiker* criticized the 'utopian' rhetoric of revolutionary reformers.[23]

Adriaan Kluit's historical thought was shaped by all these developments: the growing historical curiosity within legal scholarship, the refined use of antiquarian erudition in historical studies, and the rise of empirical social research under the aegis of Achenwall. In every case Kluit reaped the fruits of the German Enlightenment. The branch of the Göttingen scholarship proved particularly bountiful. The shared traditions of Roman and natural law, the movement of professors between universities in the Dutch Republic and the German Empire, and the language of reform couched in historical awareness created a common ground for scholars on both sides of the border. Kluit shared many of the interests of his German colleagues, and paid close attention to their jurisprudential and historical traditions. Had he been born a few decades earlier, Adriaan Kluit might have been just another erudite scholar, such as Petrus Wesseling or Christian Trotz. But Kluit's historical thought was shaped by the political instability of the 1780s and 1790s. His approach to history, though more rigorous than that of many of his predecessors, was also more politicized.

21 Van der Zande, 'Statistik and History in the German Enlightenment', 414; Bödecker, 'System und Entwicklung der Staatswissenschaften im 18. Jahrhundert', 96.

22 Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism*, 152-154; Van der Zande, 'Statistik and History in the German Enlightenment', 411-416.

23 Rassem and Wölky, 'Zur Göttinger Schule der Staatswissenschaften', 85-94.

The constitutional debates of the Patriot Era

Like many other historians of his generation, Kluit came to history through a legal curriculum. He stuck to it throughout his career. This set him apart from enlightened or humanist historians, most of whom approached history with a more literary or philosophical frame of mind. As a result most of Adriaan Kluit's oeuvre carried a strong legalist undertone. Particularly his works written in Dutch rather than in scholarly Latin were written to defend the existing legal and political structures of the Republic against reformers. From his inaugural address at Leiden's university in 1779, to his magnum opus *History of the States-government of Holland* of 1802, Kluit devoted a good deal of his energies to the defense of the sovereignty of the States. He was always ready to dispute erroneous claims of proponents of popular sovereignty and human rights. As with many historians of the revolutionary decades, it is impossible to sidestep the political implications of his work. We shall see that these shaped the development of Kluit's historical thought alongside the influences of legal, antiquarian, and statistical reasoning.

Kluit began his academic career in the 1760s as a teacher in one of the country's numerous Latin schools, where he used the weekends and holidays to do his research. Until his death in 1764, Petrus Wesseling was something of a personal mentor to Kluit. He supported Kluit's quest for new sources and introduced him to the right people. Through him Kluit met Gerard Meerman, the City Pensionary of Rotterdam and an avid book collector.[24] Meerman, who became a life-long friend, gave Kluit access to his personal library, which included one of the best collections of documents relating to the history of the Dutch state and its laws. He also helped Kluit to navigate the archives of the Dutch authorities in an era when access to archives was often restricted.[25]

Collecting and printing materials from long-closed archives could be politically sensitive. For centuries, law, religion and history had clothed state power with legitimacy. Digging up the constitutional documents of the Dutch state might pose an unwelcome challenge to the status quo. The writings of Van Loon and Van Mieris, as we have seen, undermined the myth of an ancient Batavian liberty and States sovereignty. By the time Kluit broached the subject, however, those in power were increasingly confident that they might even benefit from sound historical research. That is, if it was conducted by a historian with the right political disposition. Some prominent officials in the

24 Boutelje, *Kluit's opvattingen*, 5; Van Heel, *Een wereld van verzamelaars en geleerden*, 32-34.
25 Roelevink, ‘Perkamenten blindgangers’.

Dutch Republic, Gerard Meerman among them, had even set up their own publications of sources to shore up the legitimacy of the ruling classes.[26]

Boosted by Meerman's patronage, Kluit began work on a critical publication of the *Chronicon Egmondanum*, a thirteenth-century chronicle that was held to be one of the most important sources for the history of the medieval Netherlands. It had been published twice in the seventeenth century, but Kluit was convinced that he had much to add to earlier interpretations. If he did not teach, he combed the libraries of courts, collectors, and monasteries in the Republic and the Southern Netherlands for new sources. Not only did he publish the *Chronicon*; over the next two decades he wrote the first critical history of the counties of Holland and Zeeland, working from original sources whenever he could. This work, the *Historia Critica comitatus Hollandiae et Zeelandiae* (1777-1784), cemented his reputation and most likely earned him his professorship at the University of Leiden.[27]

When Kluit was appointed to a professorship in the antiquities and history of the United Provinces in 1779 the political climate was changing fast under the influence of the republican reformers of the Patriot movement. More than scientific merit alone might have influenced his appointment, as one of his colleagues later observed.[28] Kluit's views on the political implications of his research were probably just as important as the outstanding quality of his craftsmanship.

Critics of the aristocratic government were posing troublesome questions about the political rights of the populace and the historical origins of Dutch sovereignty, their misgivings fueled by the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau or Thomas Paine. A known opponent of theories of popular sovereignty, Kluit was a useful ally to the aristocratic rulers of the States of Holland, who held sway over Leiden's university. His expert knowledge of the complex constitution and the history of Dutch sovereignty also made Kluit an ideal candidate to develop an interpretation of Dutch history that would not threaten the legitimacy of the ruling elites. Trotz and his colleagues taught these subjects, but shied away from the political significance of their research.[29] Now, as the Patriot movement picked up steam, Kluit addressed the implications of new historical research head-on.

26 Roelevink, ‘Bewezen uit authenticque stukken’, 78-79.

27 Kluit, *Chronicon Egmundanum*; idem, *Historia Critica*; Boutelje, *Kluit's opvattingen*, 10-18. See also: Gumbert-Hepp, Gumbert, Burgers (ed.), *Annalen van Egmond*, lxxii-lxxiii.

28 Te Water, *Handelingen der jaarlykscbe vergadering van de maatschappy der Nederlandsche letterkunde te Leyden* (1807) 2-8.

29 Jansen, ‘De ontdekking van het vaderlandse recht’, 56.

In his inaugural address, held at the University of Leiden in 1779, Kluit presented a new and controversial version of Dutch political and legal history. It rejected every suggestion of States sovereignty before the abjuration of the Habsburg monarchy in 1581, and based the legitimacy of the Dutch Revolt on the most elementary natural right of self-preservation against a sovereignturned-tyrant. This was an outright reversal of the States' historical doctrine, first voiced by François Vranck in his *Deductie* of 1588, which presented the States as the representative of the Dutch people and the sovereign body on which the legitimacy of the Habsburg monarchy depended.[30]

Fig. 2. Abraham Delfos, 'View of the Academy in Leiden' (1763). The main lecture hall of Leiden's University. Here Kluit read his most important addresses before the learned public of Leiden. Source: Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden.

Kluit's account was not only closer to the truth; it also discredited the use of similar historical arguments to legitimatize popular sovereignty in the eighteenth-century Republic. According to Kluit there was no original

30 Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*, 204-212.

constitution or ancient liberty to restore, no original contract to revoke. The States had acquired their sovereignty from their deposed monarch, rather than from a theoretical contract with the people. They revolted against Philip II and emerged from the struggle as heirs to his nearly absolute sovereignty.[31] Therein sat the real sting of Kluit's argument. The Republic was mild and 'tempered' in comparison with Habsburg rule, but nonetheless the lawful successor of an absolute monarch, in principle entitled to the same rights.

For this interpretation Kluit borrowed freely from German public law. He accorded the Dutch Republic the same recognition of territorial sovereignty as had been accorded to the principalities of the German Empire at the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.[32] But Kluit's opponents increasingly undercut the principles of German natural and public law on which his argument rested. The Patriots, who shook up the political scene in the Netherlands from 1780 to 1787, were passionate readers of Thomas Paine, English Dissenters such as Price and Priestley, as well as the political theorists of the French Enlightenment. One of their leading minds, Joan Derk van der Capellen, summed up their attitude well when he attributed the 'ignorant way of thought' of his countrymen to the continued presence of 'the systems of Grotius and Pufendorf' in the education of the Dutch youth.[33]

Appalled by the 'perversion' of natural law by Van der Capellen and more radical thinkers Kluit mounted a spirited defense of its rather authoritarian natural law principles - summed up in the concept of *jus publicum universale* - in *The Abuse of Universal Public Law* (1784).[34] But Kluit's antidemocratic reading of natural law authorities was losing ground fast. The Patriots combined elements of classical republicanism and an ultra-Lockean interpretation of popular sovereignty, to create a radical mixture of ideas.[35] Few paid heed to the admonitions of a professor who condemned their misuse of natural law theories. As far as they were concerned the sovereignty of the people was natural and inalienable. If historical evidence proved otherwise, it only served to confirm past injustice.

There was, however, more to Kluit's work than all this legalism.

31 Kluit, *Inwijingsrede*, 27-29; Leeb, *Ideological Origins of the Batavian Revolution*, 201-204, Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme*, 46-47.

32 Kluit introduced the German concept of *superioritas territorialis* or territorial sovereignty into Dutch history. See Boutelje, *Kluit's opvattingen*, 19; Cf. Worst, 'Constitution, History, and Natural Law', 159-161.

33 Joan Derk van der Capellen to Meinard Tydeman, 26 January 1777 (LTK 997).

34 Kluit, *Misbruik van 't Algemeen Staatsrecht*. On the 'perversion of meaning' in the Patriot Era see: Velema, *Republicans*, 116.

35 Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme*, 59-62; Velema, *Republicans*, 172-174.

When he attacked the Patriots again a year later, with his *Sovereignty of the States defended* (1785), his argument rested on historical sources as well as a firm rejection of their natural law arguments. Kluit wrote *Sovereignty* as a direct commentary on the Patriot tract *Constitutional Restoration* (1784-1786), one of the main texts in the Patriot program.[36] No case represents the centrality of historical argument to this era as well as their confrontation. It was their focus on history that the historian Leonard Leeb had in mind when he wrote: 'Among all of the sources for the political conflicts and the revolutions of 1787 and 1795 there is no more important component than the history, especially the political and constitutional history, of the Dutch Republic'.[37] Stephan Klein and Wyger Velema have rightly criticized his thesis in the wake of John Pocock's republican revisionism, but Kluit's readers might have agreed with Leeb.[38]

In *Sovereignty of the States defended* Adriaan Kluit displayed his superior knowledge of Dutch constitutional history and its sources. He cited the constitutional scholar Pieter Bondam, Gerard van Loon, and the historical writings of the Orangist politician Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel to confirm the status of the Netherlands as a former state of the German Empire, where every right, privilege or freedom depended on the will of the sovereign ruler.[39] To expose erroneous citation and opportunistic interpretation in the Patriot program, Kluit invoked the articles of the Union of Utrecht and other documents. He was a historian just as familiar with the archives as with the erudite tomes of his predecessors and colleagues.

Focusing on his defense of States sovereignty against theories of popular sovereignty, Kluit treated the position of the Stadholder - one of the most controversial topics for the Patriots - almost as an afterthought. Though sympathetic to the Stadholderate and the House of Orange - he was even appointed teacher to the crown prince Willem Frederik, the later King William I, in the early 1790s -, he was no unconditional supporter of their power. The constitution of the Republic, he reasoned, required the influence of an 'eminent head' to balance the divisive and pretentious character of the aristocracy that made up the members of the States, even if, ultimately, the sovereignty lay with them. His anti-revolutionary stance drove Kluit into the Orangist camp. The new party, Kluit wrote to a friend in 1784, had taken aim at 'both the

36 *Grondwettige Herstelling, van Nederlands Staatswezen*; Leeb, *Ideological Origins of the Batavian Revolution*, 185-195; Van Himsbergen, 'Grondwettige Herstelling'.

37 Leeb, *Ideological Origins of the Batavian Revolution*, 4.

38 Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme*, 196; Velema, *Republicans*, 115-116. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment,* is still the best example of republican revisionism.

39 Kluit, *Souvereiniteit der Staten verdedigd*, 116-117, 119-121.

States and the Stadholder,' and sought to establish 'a complete revolution of the form of government'.[40] In his eyes, the earlier struggle between the States and the Stadholder was secondary to the new challenge they both faced.

Writing like a legal scholar with impressive historical skills, Kluit made a case for a less democratic reading of Dutch constitutional history. The quality of his historical research is often overlooked in the context of these political debates, which put so much emphasis on natural law theory. Kluit was, however, essentially a historian. He was the first to hold a chair dedicated solely to history. Placed at the crossroads of legal scholarship, philology and history, Kluit operated in the domain of both the humanist *artes* and the more prestigious law faculty. He taught aspiring lawyers to discern historical details in legal documents, applying the technical sciences of antiquarianism. He refined older teaching and pioneered new techniques in diplomatics, paleography, chronology, and sigillography.[41] His most committed students applied their new-found skills in dissertations on the legal history of the Dutch counties. Closely monitored by Kluit, they wrote on the origins of the Dutch law courts, the first taxes, and the Court of Holland.[42] Whatever political position Kluit took up, it was informed by a steady accumulation of historical knowledge and empirical social research. These characteristics of his thought came to the fore over the 1790s, as Kluit's legal scholarship lost much of its immediate relevance.

The Batavian Revolution of 1795 effectively put an end to the two-century-old republic and much of the credibility of German natural law scholarship. Under the auspices of Kluit's less historically conservative colleagues constitutions were drawn up, and the codification of the Republic's legal system was set in motion.[43] The incorporation of the Netherlands into the French Empire and the influence of the Code Napoléon on Dutch jurisprudence only reinforced the shift away from the German legal heritage. Seeking new ways in which his historical knowledge and research could be of use to present concerns, Kluit turned to the *Statistik* of Göttingen.

As early as the 1780s, Kluit had been embroiled in conflicts with his fellow professor Jean Luzac over the limitations of their academic disciplines. As a professor in the antiquities and diplomatic history of the Dutch Republic Kluit felt entitled to offer courses on recent history, even if that history had traditionally been entrusted to the professors of the *studium literarum*

40 Adriaan Kluit to Johan Meerman, 10 April 1784 (LTK 1000).
41 Hugenholtz, 'Onderwijs in de mediëvistiek', 157-161.
42 *Staatkundige Academie-verhandelingen*, voorbericht.
43 Velema, *Republicans*, 179-200; Van den Berg, 'Recht en nationale identiteit in de Bataafs-Franse periode', 108-111.

humaniorum.[44] From teaching recent history Kluit went on to write about the diplomatic and economic background of the Dutch trade during the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, in his *Something on the Last English Naval War and the Dutch Trade* (1794). In it he outlined a program for the science of *Statistik,* which Kluit variously translated as *statistiek* and *staatshuishoudkunde*. The Dutch economy, Kluit argued, should be understood in relation to international trade and domestic industries. Any regulation should take into account the laws and customs that characterized life and commerce in the Republic.[45]

Soon after the publication of this tract the French armies successfully invaded the Netherlands and Kluit was swept up in the revolutionary turmoil. Together with other Orangist professors he was ousted from his professorship in Leiden. He spent a few years trying to get back on his feet, while he compiled his grand history of the States of Holland and continued to teach students in a 'privatissimum' at home.[46] When he returned to the university in 1802, he developed this course into a complete teaching program.

The program of statistics was a natural extension of his earlier commitment to legal and historical scholarship, from past to present. Statistics offered Kluit a method to structure much of his research on the character of the Dutch state and society, and to prescribe reforms that recognized the historical origins of the Republic. These methods lent credibility and a framework to the legalist and empiricist scholarship Kluit had developed so far. Now he incorporated historical, geographic, economic, social, political, and legal aspects into his statistical descriptions of the Netherlands and the Dutch national character.[47] Like the *Statistik* of Achenwall and his followers, Kluit's program described the present state of society in much more detail than a historical approach could offer. The descriptive method they both wielded, however, was at a disadvantage in an era of accelerating change. It is hard to paint a picture of society when it will not sit still. Reliance on empirical data and historical sources made *Statistik* just as unsuited for the modern world as Kluit's constitutional history.[48]

The broadening scope of Kluit's research informed his last important work on the *History of the States-government until 1795* (1802-1805).[49] In five

44 Kluit to the curators of the university, 28 October 1786 (ASF 589); Vrij, 'Het collegegeschil tussen de hoogleraren Adriaan Kluit en Jean Luzac', 121-142, gives an anecdotal account of the conflict.

45 Kluit, *Iets over den laatsten Engelschen oorlog*; Stapelbroek et al., 'Adriaan Kluit's statistics'.

46 Hendrik Willem Tydeman described Kluit's course in *Theorie der Statistiek of Staats-kunde*, 158.

47 Stapelbroek et al., 'Adriaan Kluit's statistics', 222.

48 Van der Zande, 'Statistik and History in the German Enlightenment', 425.

49 Kluit, *Historie der Hollandsche Staatsregering*.

volumes Kluit tied up several strands of the constitutional debate.[50] One more time Kluit returned to the history of Dutch sovereignty. He devoted his first three volumes to demonstrate, with a wide array of historical documents, that the States had been the sovereign rulers of the Netherlands since the first days of the Republic. He then continued to reinforce his theses from 1779, 1785 and 1787, to show that the historical foundations of Dutch sovereignty were rooted in the rule of the counts. He rehashed old legal arguments, but also added new perspectives on the relationship between the economic and territorial basis of feudal power, and the sovereignty acquired by Dutch counts.[51] He described how the growing wealth of the Dutch cities had helped them to attain a privileged position under the absolute rule of the counts, and how the States had emerged as a representative political body that, when the time came, rightfully claimed the vacated sovereignty of Philip II.

It might seem strange that Kluit continued the constitutional debate a decade after the Republic had fallen, after the natural rights theories and democratic reforms of the Batavian Republic had done away with so much of the old constitution. On the one hand, Kluit remained unconvinced that the constitution of the Republic was completely lost. In a commentary on Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel's last draft for a new constitution, written around 1801, Kluit maintained that a counter-revolution, 'even bigger [...] than in 1787,' might still be possible.[52] On the other hand, the methodology of statistics lent new purpose to historical research on the Dutch state. The legalist mindset of the 1780s had been enlarged with a broader definition of the bonds that held society together - bonds that could only be understood as a product of historical evolution. What had not changed was Kluit's critique of enlightened abstraction. This critique is best represented by the anti-revolutionary works he wrote just before the demise of the Republic.

The mistaken abstractions of *Philosophie*

To understand the strong connection between Kluit's historical and political thought we return to 1793, when Kluit resumed his political writing after the relative quiet of the Orange restoration of 1787 and the order of the Republic was again threatened. The revolution in Paris was in full swing. Louis XVI was put on trial and executed in January, and the Terror was about to take off. As a staunch supporter of lawful authority Kluit was appalled by the events.

50 Veen, 'Legitimatie van de souvereiniteit'.
51 Tribe, *Governing Economy*, 20-34, on similar discourse in the German states.
52 Kluit, 'Consideratiën op het plan' (CB, 1.10.12, Nr. 59) f.3.

He feared a resurgence of Patriot protest in the Netherlands, encouraged by the French revolutionary armies marching north. He wrote feverishly, producing the angry and rather long-winded *The Rights of Man in France* (1793), which he published anonymously.[53] It is his only published work in which he tried to theorize the conservative sentiment that ran through all his writings. This paragraph surveys the ways in which Kluit's political thought was tied up with his approach to history. Three related features stand out: a legalist conviction that a good society is ruled by good laws; a legal positivism that favors time-tested laws, manners, and morals over the universalism of the French revolution; and a deep distrust of enlightened abstraction, strengthened by a belief in empirical rigor.

The first characteristic of his political thought is his legalist view of society, already noted in his historical works. In this respect Kluit was similar to many of his contemporaries in government and the academies. He was as much an heir to the jurisprudence of Grotius as to the historiography of Van Loon and Van Mieris. Like the *Sovereignty of the States defended*, Kluit's *Rights of Man* was written as a commentary on what he perceived as a possible attack on the Republic's status quo. This time he targeted the latest French *Declaration of the Rights of Man* as an example that might stir up old Patriot sentiments. He argued that the Dutch would not need to assert such rights, since the Republic already guaranteed every civil right that mattered. A rather blunt statement, as every Patriot contemporary might have noted. Yet within the legalist thought of Kluit it made perfect sense.

To Kluit and many other Orangist theorists liberty was first and foremost defined as the rule of law.[54] In the Netherlands, he wrote, ‘Liberty, (in every sense of the word), is dependent on obedience to the Law’. The laws, he continued, ‘serve excellently the interests of the country's industrious and mercantile Inhabitants; thus these good, wise, and gentle laws increase the happiness of the Citizens’.[55] Who would want to enact a new system of abstract citizen's rights when the liberties of the Dutch were enshrined in the laws and customs of the Republic? The citizens of the Republic, Kluit wrote, enjoyed the freedom of press and freedom of conscience; they enjoyed the presumption of innocence in judicial matters and the protection of property; they had a certain right to education; and lived in a state under the rule of law. No political liberty could trump those civil liberties.

53 [Kluit], *De Rechten van den Mensch*.
54 Velema, *Republicans*, 129-130.
55 [Kluit], *De Rechten van den Mensch*, 133.

In the furious debate over the true meaning of liberty the Patriots and their more radical successors tended to identify liberty ever more closely with popular sovereignty. Their opponents, reacting, withdrew in a defense of historical rights as the sole safeguards of liberty. Johan Meerman, Gerard Meerman's son and a good friend of Kluit, went as far as to argue that 'political liberty is, I cannot find words strong enough to express my conviction, the destructor, the exterminator, the murderer of civil liberty'.[56] To Kluit the rule of law was dependent on the conservation of historical laws and rights, and adherence to the old constitution and 'temperate government' of the Republic.

Arguments that appealed to the antiquity and authority of an ancient constitution can be found throughout the history of political thought. The Dutch States, in Vranck's *Deduction*, had argued that their ancient representative function justified their usurpation of the Habsburg sovereignty. Radical Levellers of the English Civil War had fought for a restoration of the ancient constitution - their claims founded mainly on 'a vehement conviction that what ought to be had once been,' in the words of John Pocock. Even the Patriot authors of *Constitutional Restoration* argued that the old constitution, however imperfect, could be the basis for a new republican order.[57] The revolutions of the eighteenth century, however, put this type of argument in a new perspective.

In this respect Kluit's constitutional thought most resembled Edmund Burke's. It was Burke who, with an eye to the English common law, made ancient constitutionalism a theory of political conservatism. The English common law had long been understood as a repository of accumulative experience, in use since time immemorial. Its very ancientness gave the common law its authority. Burke applied the language of the common law to the Constitution of England to argue against radical reform - be it a return to original principles *or* the establishment of universal rights. Both approaches failed to grasp that the worth of the ancient constitution and the common law lay exactly in the organic way in which they encompassed lived experience. Their working principles transcended the understanding of the individual intellect.[58]

Adriaan Kluit, who praised Burke, could not transpose this reasoning to the Republic, which lacked a strong common law tradition. The Dutch state was founded on an act of revolt, rather than on slow growth and adaptation to

56 Meerman, *Burgerlyke Vryheid*, 42; cited approvingly in [Kluit], *De Rechten van den Mensch*, 66.

57 Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*, 204-212; Pocock, 'The Study of the Origins of the Past', 172; Velema, *Republicans*, 187; Leeb, *Ideological Origins of the Batavian Revolution*, 185-195.

58 Pocock, 'Burke and the Ancient Constitution', 202-203.

experience, as Kluit himself had pointed out in 1779.[59] The rupture of the Dutch Revolt was, however, not so unbridgeable that it was impossible for Kluit to reconstruct a history of the Dutch state in which Philip II's historically acquired sovereignty was rightfully transferred to the States of the new Republic. Kluit could and did argue, in *History of the States-government*, that the foundations of the Dutch Republic were much older than the Republic itself. In his eyes, the authority of those historical foundations was still embodied in the Republic's current laws and institutions. That authority should be respected. A constitution, he wrote, 'once confirmed, and connecting thousands of links and bonds of citizens among each other, of rights, of property,' should not be disbanded but under the most extraordinary circumstances, and then only by agreement of both rulers and ruled.[60]

Like Burke, Kluit argued that the existing laws of the Republic were bound up with the typical character of Dutch society and its evolution over time. His statistical descriptions of the Netherlands, which took into account much more than the Dutch legal system, only reinforced this idea, which became central to the thought of influential German jurists such as Friedrich Carl von Savigny and Friedrich Julius Stahl. For them, laws were not merely a collection of well-formulated rules prescribed by a legislator and applicable to any place or time, but a historical corpus of beliefs and customs that defined the nation. Thus, to Kluit, existing arrangements should always be favored over the cosmopolitan universalism preached by Thomas Paine or the French *philosophes*.[61]

This brings us to the third feature of Kluit's thought, which characterizes all of his political and historical writings: a deep distrust of enlightened philosophy. In most of his writings Kluit returned to the fundamental opposition between moral universals - represented by natural law and declarations of universal rights - and the world shaped by history. The principles of the first, he maintained, should not be made to bear on the second. Philosophical moralizing was, in his view, of limited concern to the reality of political society. From his *Abuse of Universal Public Law* (1784) to the *History of the States-government* (1802-1805) Kluit returned to this theme. Philosophizing only served to speculate on the way society might be shaped if men had 'always been as calm and inclined to their best interests and the

59 Worst, 'Constitution, History, and Natural Law', 160; Leeb, *Ideological Origins of the Batavian Revolution*, 199-204.

60 [Kluit], *De Rechten van den Mensch*, 114.

61 Edelstein, 'Enlightenment Rights Talk', on the cosmopolitanism of the French Enlightenment.

rules of statecraft prescribed by nature and reason,' and 'always as perfect, of immaculate manners, informed and enlightened and of such worthiness as they are, in these philosophical days of enlightenment, portrayed for us *on paper*'. It presented the world as it ought to be, rather than the world as it was - as the world 'could only be in the wicked condition of the Human Race'.[62]

The political unrest in Europe, Kluit wrote, was the product of 'our days, in which all people want to be philosophers, deciding on Liberty, Government, [...] and Constitutions'; days in which they 'want to implement their philosophical reflections with violence'. Kluit found the revolutionary teachings of the Patriots and the French casting 'strange shadows' rather than light. Their programs abused the distinguished name of Enlightenment. In its name, and for 'natural equality, freedom and perfection of government,' Europe has been subjected to 'confusion and division,' Kluit wrote.[63] One could recognize some fundamental principles, like original popular sovereignty, but these principles should never supersede the real foundation of society that lay in its historical origins. If society were to completely abandon the legacy of earlier generations, Kluit concluded in a Burkean vein, no bonds could be held sacred.[64]

Yet, for all his aversion to moral abstractions and the cosmopolitan ideals of Enlightenment thought, I would hesitate to qualify Kluit as an outright enemy of the Enlightenment. He indeed shared many of the ideas of Counter-Enlightenment thinkers. Like later conservatives, he held a pessimistic view of human nature - especially when it came to the political involvement of the populace at large. He was a faithful Christian, and even produced a historical defense of biblical chronology in the 1770s.[65] But his ideas owed just as much to the empiricist sciences of state of the German Enlightenment. He shared with them the belief that the workings of the state and society could be understood, and that all this knowledge could be harnessed to create meaningful reforms. Even though Kluit appreciated the ideas of Burke, he did not share his and the later Romantic's view of society as an organic whole beyond individual understanding. His understanding of history was essentially secular and progressive. Figures like Adriaan Kluit illustrate the diversity of eighteenth-century political thought, divided not only along the lines of Enlightenment and its counterparts, but also in their approach to the past. He represents a way

62 [Kluit], *De Rechten van den Mensch*, 398, 39.
63 Ibidem, 110-111, 175-176.
64 Ibidem, 354-355.
65 Kluit, *Beschrijving van den Keizer Augustus bij Christus geboorte*.

of thought that was modern in its critical treatment of history but, in the end, doomed by the dawn of a modern era that cast off the weight of history to view the past in a new light.

Dead ends

In this article I have tried to chart the development of one man's approach to the past, and the political ideology with which it was entangled. To Adriaan Kluit, for whom the present built on long centuries of historical evolution, understanding in history and in politics were inseparable. Whatever method he applied to history, it would be just as relevant to the present politics. A master of the archives, Kluit nonetheless lacked the modern, historicist insight that every epoch in history is best understood on its own terms. This is not to deride an eighteenth-century historian for failing to walk a certain path to modernity. It is to say that Kluit's approach to the past, understood on its own terms, was concerned with historical questions quite unlike ours. If we want to understand with what intent Kluit undertook his historical investigations, what he hoped to learn, and why he felt that the historical record justified his political views, we must acknowledge this difference.

Kluit's legal history was closer to the enlightened sciences of man and society than to the philosophical or humanist histories that still held on to the maxim *historia magistra vitae* - history is the teacher of life. Kluit was more attentive to facts than to the creation of a compelling narrative or a coherent philosophy. His idea of historical research was more akin to a judicial process of fact-finding, tied to the principles of natural law. When it came to such theoretical issues as the founding principles of the state, his thought was both guided and limited by his unyielding loyalty to the *jus publicum unversalis*. Legal discourse may have driven and enabled new historical interest, it also conceived of history in a narrow legal sense, especially if compared with the enlightened historiography of civil society. Other than many enlightened historians, however, Kluit offered precise and skilled readings of source materials. He can be said to have pioneered an ‘archival turn’ in the Netherlands, decades before Leopold Ranke revolutionized academic history in Germany. Like the jurists of the German Empire, he analyzed his sources, and decided how much weight should be accorded to each, before examining how they should be brought in line with the supreme commands of the *jus publicum unversalis*.

His empirical method, which rested on the critical reading of source

materials, gained depth when Kluit ventured into the field of *Statistik*. He explored the possibilities of this new discipline in the early 1790s and successfully set up his own course in Leiden by the end of the century. In Kluit's eyes *Statistik* held the promise of reform based on strictly empirical knowledge, free from the Patriot illusions about political action. Supported by the findings of his new science, administrators could gather as much knowledge on the present as on the past conditions of society. Or so Kluit hoped. He was no stranger to the siren song of positivist certainty, in law or in science. He was convinced of the truth of his own historical discoveries, the validity of every law properly enacted, and the possibility of precisely measuring society with the instruments of *Statistik*.

When we take these aspects of his thought into account it is easier to understand why Kluit had so much confidence in the *ancien régime* of the Republic, why his support for the Republic's historical constitution turned to almost reactionary conservatism in his *Rights of Man*. The closer Kluit looked at the historical complexities of the Dutch state and society, the more indispensable every detail seemed. The very descriptive precision of his own research convinced Kluit that the Republic was held together by an intricate network of bonds, both legal and social. Describing society ‘as it was’, Kluit only seemed to confirm to himself the success of the temperate constitution of the Republic, its good laws, and its many liberties. Changing something as fundamental as the constitution of the Republic could, in Kluit's eyes, completely alter the character of Dutch society. ‘National Character,’ he wrote in his manuscript for a *Statistics for the Netherlands*, ‘depends very much on, indeed originates from the forms of government and political arrangements; and thus that Character is susceptible to great Change, indeed to Revolution, when the form of government is changed’.[66] The Batavian Revolution of 1795 put this thesis to the test. As the old republic fell apart and a new one was erected, changed, incorporated into the French empire, and turned into a Kingdom under the monarchy of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, Kluit continued to hold on to the relevance of historical and legal continuity. Not only did he burden his monumental *History of the States-government* with another defense of the authority and sovereignty of the States; he also argued for constitutional continuity in his statistical writings.

If Kluit's deeply conservative frame of mind would have allowed him to break with the historical continuity he valued in the Republic is hard to say. He remained convinced of his earlier conclusions until his sudden death in January 1807. He was killed when, by accident, a gunpowder ship

66 Kluit, *Statistiek van Nederland* (BPL 1844) f85.

blew up in one of Leiden's canals, destroying a huge swath of the inner city and killing almost a hundred and fifty people. When a new Europe emerged from the Napoleonic wars, Kluit's particular variety of historical thought had long reached a dead end. Decades of war and revolution had severed the link between the past and present that had been unmistakable to observers like Kluit. The new Kingdom of the Netherlands was founded on a written constitution that paid only lip service to the historical constitution of the Republic.[67] It is doubtful if Kluit would have appreciated that artificially created historicity so characteristic of the nineteenth-century nation state. Tellingly, Kluit's *History of the States-government* found its most loyal successor in Willem Bilderdijk's unabashedly royalist *History of the Fatherland* (1832-1839), which sought to support the new monarchy by overplaying the role of the House of Orange in Dutch history. Even *statistiek*, though more attentive to the present, could no longer keep up the semblance of continuity in society.

Fig. 3. Pieter Gerardus van Os, 'Ruins on the Northside of the Steenschuur after Leiden's Gunpowder Catastrophe' (1807). Kluit was among the most prominent victims of the accidental explosion that destroyed much of Leiden's old city center. Source: Rijksmuseum.

Because Kluit's historical and political thought were so entwined with the constitutional history of the Republic he was left helpless when the Republic

67 Van Sas, 'De republiek voorbij', 100.

fell. He refused to see the changing political landscape as a final departure from the familiar history of the Republic. There is no doubt that, in the end, he would have been overtaken by events. The sense of rupture that emerged in these years, when the past ceased to be a reliable guide to the challenges of an ever-changing present, led Reinhart Koselleck and Peter Fritzsche to identify the revolutionary decades as the formative years of modern historical consciousness.[68] Adriaan Kluit's thought both supports and undercuts their argument. Like the men and women in Fritzsche's study, Kluit died in a world in which many of his old ideas had lost their immediate relevance. But unlike them, he never drew the melancholy conclusion that the past would now be forever out of reach of the present. Kluit remained a thinker of the eighteenth century.

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ASF Archief van Senaat en Faculteiten, University Library Leiden.
CB Collectie Brantsen, Dutch National Archive.
KVB Koninklijke Vereniging van het Boekvak, University Library of Amsterdam.
LTK Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde, University Library Leiden.

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68 Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft*; Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present*.

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